

OSNZ news

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

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Note Deadline for the September issue will be
10th August.

Australian Little Grebes near Timaru

Early in January 1994, Dave York observed two pairs of Australian Little Grebes breeding in a flooded gravel pit at the Levels, north of Timaru. What was unusual about this sighting was that, although they have bred successfully in both the North and South Islands, this could be the first time that they have been seen in New Zealand nesting in pairs.

The fresh water in the pit varied in depth over a period from 30 to 100 mm., being supplied on an irregular-basis from an overflow pipe connected to an irrigation canal. The nests were about 50 metres apart, one in the centre of the ponded area and the other some metres from the bank. Both nests were the usual floating structures built of pond weed and located in the centre of patches of exotic grass.

The central nest contained six eggs and the other five eggs. When first seen, the eggs were yellow, and as time progressed the staining deepened to a brownish yellow.

I returned to the area on 10/1/94 and spent two days moving a hide into position, and, by the time the first photographs were taken on 13 January, three chicks had hatched and three eggs remained. Later that day one chick disappeared, probably taken by a White-faced Heron which was always in the vicinity of the nest.

Incubation change-over took place about every thirty minutes. Before leaving the nest on all occasions, the eggs were covered with weed. To reinforce this procedure the weed was stamped down over the eggs. When the adults were diving or returning to the nest, some of the young would fall off into the water or onto the platform. This was not a problem, as they can swim confidently almost from the day of their birth. At this stage, they are fed by the attending adult, either on the water

or in the underwing position. By using their strong legs they can push their way up the side and return to the underwing position.

The chicks have a singular appearance, with their dark cryptic marking and a strip of red over their eyes and at the gape. They were fed on the flowers of the water weed and small tadpoles - larger ones were rejected.

The sitting bird would solicit copulation by lying stretched out on the nest platform with its head and neck curved over the side and the bill almost touching the water. Both sexes performed in a similar manner.

I returned to Dunedin on 15 January and did not resume photography until 20 January. As expected, the central nest was abandoned and five chicks were alive and well. The other nest now contained only three eggs, which later proved to be infertile.

GEORGE CHANCE



George Chance published details of New Zealand's first Australian Little Grebe, located near Arrowtown in April 1968 (Notornis 16 (1)). Despite their absence in Oct/Nov 1994, six birds were present in January 1995. Two pairs of grebes were again breeding at the Levels in February 1995. (Ed.)

AGM Stewart Island - 11-14 May 1995

When it was announced at the 1994 AGM that Stewart Island would be the venue for the next meeting, doubts were expressed about attendance. The remarkably similar number of members who turned up this year proved those doubts unfounded.

Migration occurred from the Far North to Invercargill, the largest flock being of nine from Wairarapa - a superb effort by the team in the face of expense. The Shearwater Inn provided comfortable accommodation, toasting the travel-weary occupants. Incoming birders built steadily from Wednesday onwards, feeding on blue cod at night.

The first activity was a Thursday afternoon field trip to Maori Beach, lead by Southland RR Lloyd Esler and well-known historian/author John Hall-Jones. These two capable leaders provided all the field trips with fascinating anecdotes and identification of Stewart Island's ample bird life.

On Friday morning two field trips converged at Wohler's Monument - an early missionary. On the nearby golf course at Ringaringa Beach, two Cattle Egrets were seen teeing up on the 4th. This gave a new meaning to the golfing term 'up and down', referring to the terrain of course. Two afternoon field trips included the

second Maori Beach visit by some, and a coastal trek back from Horseshoe Bay by others. Old mill steam boilers and engines provided an interesting history lesson at Maori Beach with some shell hunting. At Horseshoe Point, good views of Buller's and Shy/White-capped Mollymawks and Stewart Island Shags were had. The old Wildlife Service/Alan Wright house still stands at nearby Sarah Cove.

The eagerly awaited kiwi-spotting trip to The Neck got underway that evening, when 31 (which one bribed the skipper?) merry torch-bearers set out on the MV *Volantis* from the Half Moon Bay wharf at dusk. The party were treated to great Buller's Mollymawk sightings off Acker's Point, as well as a sunset over Mt Rakeahua and the Tin Range. Three kiwis were spotted - firstly by the skipper decked out in a spotlight and a battery backpack, and then by the group. Two males were carrying out a beach patrol, while the third juvenile male skulked in the low forest. The return trip on the *Volantis* was so smooth that many weary souls nodded off, aided no doubt by the food and beverage plied in the warm cabin at The Neck's jetty.

Saturday dawned fine and clear, a perfect day for a cruise. Working in two groups, birders were treated to a wonderful day of sea- and landbirds, combining a Foveaux Strait cruise on the *Southern Isle* with a few hours on Ulva Island in Paterson Inlet. Stewart Island Shags, penguins, mollymawks, Weka, parakeets and Kaka were the highlights feather-wise, the mollymawks following the *Southern Isle* nearly back to the Half Moon Bay wharf.

The actual AGM progressed well that evening. With incoming president Chris Robertson taking the chair soon after proceedings began, periodic countdowns to the ensuing meal meant quick business, and the meeting finished in record time. The South Seas Hotel became the next stopover, and the stocks of local Roaring Forties Ale fell steadily. The meal was quite scrumptious, while the crayfish quickly lost all resemblance to Tom Hartly. (Sorry, Tom, your crustacean jokes were so bad I had to get you back!)

Results of the bird skull quiz and the twitchathon were announced, with the 'Ford Laser Mob' of Canterbury (Sheila Petch, Tony Crocker and Mark McFadden) taking the trophy with 56 species. I must say that bribery of the scrutineers was not an issue. Tony did not know that I was a scrutineer when he gave me the job of writing this - honest!! The evening concluded with a tantalising preview of plates by artist Derek Onley for the forthcoming Field Guide, to be published in 1996, and a slide show of birds of Henderson Island in the Pitcairn group by Jim Jolly.

On Sunday, departures back to respective territories were the order of the

day, with 18 remaining to trek to Mason Bay and nine heading off to Milford Sound.

What struck many people about the Stewart Islanders was the laid-back lifestyle. A real gem of an example of this came when Lloyd spotted the *Southern Isle* on a dry maintenance dock a day before the Foveaux/Ulva trip. He rang the skipper and reminded him of the next day's programme and was greeted with the remark 'Oh, was that tomorrow?'

A huge thank you to Lloyd for the incredible management of flighty members of the flock, and to John Hall-Jones, who entertained with historic accounts of early Stewart Island.

PAUL CUMING

The next AGM will be held at Foxton Beach, Manawatu, on Queen's Birthday weekend 1996.

From the President's Desk

The Society had a very successful AGM (94 members present) on Stewart Island (where they had their own amusing version of Black Magic) and your Council is now settling into an extensive review of the Constitution and activities of the Society as directed by the AGM. A number of members made written submissions on the notices of motion, and these proved to be a most thoughtful presentation of the full range of views represented. Copies of these submissions have been sent to all RRs, so that those who wish to may see them. Hopefully some of the views represented will help in your submissions to the review.

The details of the review of our activities and the Constitution are set out with a reprint of the Constitution on a separate paper enclosed with your publications. The sub-committee set up to review your comments and recommend any changes to Council in October is as follows - President (chair), Peter Bull, Jenny Hawkins, David Medway, Allan Munro and Stella Rowe. Written submissions close on 10 August 1995.

I will shortly be introducing a new activity for Council which will hopefully keep us well informed of the aspirations of members and provide a more regular association of members with Council. David Crockett as Vice-President will be in charge of direct contact and assistance for the RRs. Each Council member will be given responsibility for two regions (other than the one in which they reside) and will be expected to regularly visit and maintain contact with the activities in those areas. As President I am intending to make at least one visit to each region during my three year term. I am already receiving invitations. These Council appointments will be made at the October Council meeting and promoted thereafter in *OSNZ News*.

Please support all those in your Society who work to make the Society function. Enjoy your bird study. Share your information with others. Help others to enjoy the study of birds. Promote the activities of the Society and encourage new or potential members.

CHRISTOPHER ROBERTSON
President



Royal Spoonbill census - Waitangi Day 1995

The outcome of the Waitangi Day 1995 census was not very conclusive numbers-wise.

A total of 556 Royal Spoonbills looks not bad. Then one realises that last winter we counted 560 and this latest breeding season with all those colonies, we should have had at least 50 fledglings in addition to all those adults. Either some were not counted, by being elusive, hiding in unknown spots or disappearing to Australia.

I would have expected a further increase with all these new colonies mushrooming around the country, with the latest being at Kapiti Island. (Congratulations to Wellington region - who is next?)

It is amazing that omissions should occur in a census like this one. However it happened - a few regions didn't bother to respond. It is assumed that no spoonbills were present that day in those regions, although it would be nice to have it in writing and not have to guess.

An observation - the Okarito colony is the only one not on an island.

The results:

Far North	14
Northland	0
Auckland	7
South Auckland	0
Waikato	3
Bay of Plenty	6
Gisborne	7
Taranaki	0
Manawatu	18
Wanganui	0
Hawkes Bay	0
Wairarapa	23
Wellington	12
Nelson	24
Marlborough	125
Canterbury	41
West Coast	40
Otago	201
Southland	35
Total	556

Many thanks to all who participated in this census and let's hope that we have another successful census in mid-June. I am looking forward to the comparison with this latest census.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

Advice to First-time Authors

A few comments reaching me during my first year of tenure as editor of *Notornis* indicate that some prospective authors are uncertain whether their work can be published in a scientific journal, mainly *Notornis*, and how they should go about this. The following is intended as encouragement, with a few hints and ideas which will, I hope, help first-time authors complete their work.

I write 'first-time authors' because I do not believe that there is a difference between a 'professional' or an 'amateur' scientist if both have little experience in publishing. Scientific writing is not specifically taught at most universities and the majority of practising scientists have to pick it up by self-training, often involving peer criticism. Scientific training neither enables one to free oneself from the potential shock of being criticised, nor does it guarantee a free and smooth access to publication. There are skills involved which need to be learned but these are not complicated nor difficult.

Firstly, ornithology is one of the fields of science where amateur participants can and do make significant contributions. An 'amateur' ornithologist is in possession of a set of very valuable skills, has experience using special methodology and a great body of knowledge. Identification skills alone demonstrate this clearly! Amateurs therefore do not lack scientific training and knowledge - on the contrary. Most ornithologists constantly strive to improve and expand their knowledge, just as any good scientist does.

Secondly, a piece of work is not finished when the binoculars are put back into the bag, notebook tucked away, and the ornithologist is comfortably resting in front of the fireplace with that much-desired cup of warm (or warming) liquid in hand! Information which is not evaluated and made available to your peers is non-existent information! A great deal of personal satisfaction can also be gained from seeing one's work published and available for use.

The first advice: plan your work. The second, even more important: ask for advice. 'Outsiders' sometimes do not realise that present-day science is run, to a large degree, on cooperation and advice from your colleagues, friends and peers. This advice is frequently sought, frequently given, and is free. Do not hesitate to ask for advice at any stage of work relating to planning, methodology, execution, note-

taking, evaluation and writing. It is often much preferable to take advice at the beginning rather than later - many problems are time-consuming to sort out retrospectively, and the same amount of time is more willingly given in several small amounts than in one long one at the end!

A few comments on the review process of scientific journals. The core of the publication process and the quality sieve of scientific publishing is peer review - the solicitation of opinion from independent, competent reviewers. In *Notornis*, two reviewers are invited to comment on every full-length manuscript, and one on a short note. One member of the Editorial Panel also comments on all submissions. Theoretically a manuscript can be accepted without revision, with revision or rejected. In almost every case alterations are requested, which can be minor or major. Acceptance without any changes is an extremely rare occurrence. Rejection is also rare in *Notornis*. But take heart - the reviewer is, almost inevitably, on your side. The smallpox marks of the reviewers' pens are not signs of disease, they are marks of immunisation. Reviewers are on your side because they want to improve your piece of work. They should be helpful; they are however specifically asked to call a spade a spade. How does one deal with this?

First of all, and I write this twice as it is extremely important: 1) do not do anything in a rush or in anger; neither is a good adviser. 2) do not do anything in a rush or in anger; neither is a good adviser. Sit down and read through the remarks carefully. Weigh the arguments - are they right or not, and did you write the thing clearly enough? Argue with facts, if you have them - a level-headed, factual argument is always gratefully received and, more frequently than not, accepted. After all, it is still your name which stands by the paper, not the reviewer's nor the editor's. Again you can ask for advice.

As a final word of encouragement: the owner of all these comments has very rarely had any piece of his written work, small or large, published without revision. I know that sometimes it is not easy and sometimes it hurts - however, in hindsight, I am grateful to all who have taken time to read my work closely and have written down their doubts. It has always improved my paper. No one is in possession of All Knowledge, and we all can and should learn from each other.

GÁBOR LÖVEI
Editor, *Notornis*

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 1995

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 1995. Nominations should be on the

standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary.

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

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

RAEWYN EMPSON
(Hon. Secretary)

National Survey - White-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull colonies

The objective is to locate all White-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull colonies and determine the number of nesting pairs.

Concern has been expressed at the apparent decline in numbers of White-fronted Terns and Black-billed Gulls at various sites around New Zealand in recent years. In order to obtain information on the number of breeding pairs of these two species, it is planned to carry out a survey of their colonies during the 1995/96 breeding season. Initially the survey was to have included Black-fronted Terns. However, because of the enormous task of surveying for all three species at once and the difficulty of seeing Black-fronted Tern colonies from light aircraft, it has been decided to concentrate on finding and counting the pairs at White-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull colonies.

North Island - since there are few Black-billed Gull colonies in the North Island, it is hoped that members will be able to carry out a complete survey for both White-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull colonies.

South Island - because of the enormous task to search the many long riverbeds of the eastern South Island for nesting Black-billed Gulls, we recommend that members give priority to locating colonies of this species. Should there be time, then searches for White-fronted Tern colonies, which occur mainly at coastal sites, would be very useful.

As a result of a generous legacy from the late Mr Louis Wintle, funds are available to hire light planes from which the long stretches of rivers and coastlines can be relatively quickly searched and the general location of colonies noted. Subsequently, ground parties can visit the colonies to determine location, habitat type and approximately how many pairs/nests are present (fill out a Colonial Nest Record card with the details). No doubt many Black-fronted Tern colonies will be located in the course of this survey. Please fill out a nest record card for each observation of such a colony.

Please exercise care for your own safety and the welfare of the birds when visiting colonies. Gulls and terns may desert their colonies as a result of disturbance, particularly during colony establishment when nest-building and egg-laying. Don't wade across rivers or climb steep rock stacks when conditions are unsuitable or you are inexperienced - preferably go with a friend.

If you are keen to assist with this survey, please contact your Regional Representative or the survey coordinator for your area; they will know what has and has not been done. If you find a colony or hear of one through a friend, don't assume that the coordinator already knows about it - give them a ring asap. Anybody requiring Colonial Nest Record cards or who has an enquiry about the scheme, please contact us.

JENNY HAWKINS
Black Horse Quarry
R.D.1. Nelson
ph. (03) 545 1667

RALPH POWLESLAND
64 Roseneath Terrace
Wellington 1
ph. (04) 386 3323

Mohua Survey - September 1995

OSNZ Otago has arranged a survey of Mohua (Yellowheads) for 15-17 September 1995, based at Waikaia Forest Camp, Glenaray Station.

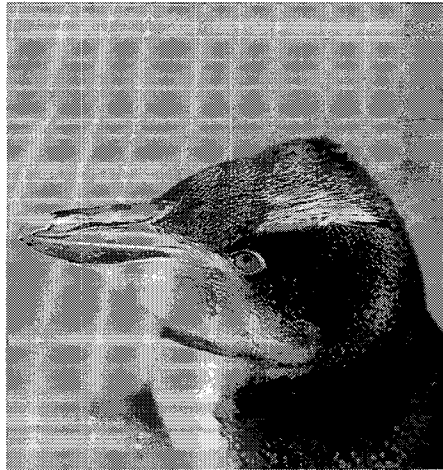
As much beech forest as possible will be surveyed for Mohua. This follows on from several years of exploration by Malcolm Foord and other people to determine the status of the species in the area. While numbers are lower in this part of the birds' range, Malcolm has located high numbers in the Blue Mountains (between the Clutha River and Tapanui, West Otago), and estimated a population of 2,300 as a result of mapping breeding territories for the 1994 Report for the Mohua (Yellowhead) Monitoring Programme.

A reasonable standard of fitness is essential, as there are areas of extreme steepness in this beautiful location, although not so steep areas along the road and river will also need to be covered. Access is by driving through Gore or Lumsden and on to Riverdale and Waikaia township, thence to Glenaray Station. Costs include all catering, and a good range of forest species is to be expected.

For further information, please contact:

LOUISE FOORD
33 Brownville Crescent
Maori Hill, Dunedin
Ph. (03) 467 5041.

Erect-crested Penguin on Auckland west coast



On 5 March 1995 a fisherman found a penguin washed up on rocks at Whatipu, west of Auckland, and took it to Bird Rescue where it was nursed back to health by Linda Young and released. Linda sent me photographs of the penguin which I passed on to Dr John Warham, who was able to determine that the bird was a young Erect-crested Penguin. According to the checklist, this species straggles commonly to the east coast of the North Island, but has not otherwise been noted on the west coast north of Taranaki.

BRIAN GILL

Program available

Drs J.A. van Frankener and C.J.F. Ter Braak (1993) in *Auk* 110(3): 492-502 described a method for calculating discriminant functions for sexing fulmarine petrels from measurements. This method is applicable to other uses, eg. for comparing population parameters etc. The program is available for the cost of a new 3 1/2" disk, postage and three photocopied pages from Dr J. Warham, Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, P.B. 4800, Christchurch.

JOHN WARHAM

Beach Patrol Scheme in 1994 - preliminary report

This report covers the results from 422 cards up until 1 April 1995. 2,528 km were patrolled, which is well under the average of 4,136 km per year travelled in the period 1971-92. This represents the least amount of beach patrolling since 1968, when 2,045 km were travelled. The falloff in beach patrolling was most noticeable with no cards received from Muriwai beach, which was patrolled monthly in previous years. Most regions were patrolled less than

previously - only Auckland West, Auckland East, East Coast North Island and Wellington West travelled more than 100 km.

Dead seabirds found totalled 4,186, far fewer than the average of 9,865 for the period 1971-92. Only two years have yielded lower totals - 1987 when 4,124 birds were collected and 1972 when 4,015 were collected. Of the coastal regions where greater than 50 km were covered in 1994, Wellington South had the highest rate of recovery at 5.23 birds per km (Southern Black-backed Gulls were the main contributor to this rate). The lowest rate of recovery was on Otago beaches with 0.5 birds per km.

Unusual finds included a Soft-plumaged Petrel found on a Hawkes Bay beach in June. This is only the fifth recorded in the scheme. The others also washed up on the eastern or south side of the North Island. An unconfirmed Manx Shearwater was found on a Northland beach in November. This is the third record for the scheme, the two previous being found on Wellington West beaches. Other unusual records included a Wedge-tailed Shearwater, five Sooty Terns, one probable Long-tailed Skua and a Royal Albatross.

Despite the lack of beach patrolling and the small number of birds collected overall, Kerguelen Petrels were found in higher than usual numbers. A wreck of 227 birds occurred from August to October, mostly on North Island west coast beaches. Only the totals of 600 in 1984 and 280 in 1981 exceeded the 1994 collection. Strangely, the 1994 wreck did not coincide with a large wreck of prions, Blue Petrels and other Southern Ocean species.

The following are the provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled in 1994.

	Birds	Km. travelled
Auckland East	271	249
Auckland West	1973	1160
Bay of Plenty	155	81
Canterbury Nth	41	36
Canterbury Sth	5	1
East Coast N.I	66	130
Fiordland	1	1
North Coast S.I.	283	83
Otago	35	70
Outlying Islands	2	4
Southland	415	95
Taranaki	131	58
Wairarapa	5	22
Westland	9	11
Wellington Sth	272	52
Wellington West	522	239
TOTAL	4186	2528

The success of the beach patrol scheme in 1994 was due largely to those people who organised patrols for groups of members and the dedicated few who carried out

regular patrols. A great debt is owed to Ralph and Mary Powlesland who have compiled beach patrol summaries since 1981. The database which holds records from all 22,000 beach patrol cards is an invaluable resource for OSNZ. The programmes that have been written to produce the annual summary tables will certainly make my life easier and will encourage further analysis of the data on this system.

GRAEME TAYLOR
Convenor

This report covers the period until 1 April 1995. Since that time more cards have been received, which probably means that the figures are considerably higher, but these were not available at the time of going to press. Ed.

Nest Record Scheme - report for the year ending 30 March 1995

This year, 40 members and friends contributed 474 cards covering 51 species, bringing the grand total to 23,311 cards. This represented an increase in support for the scheme in all three measures. To date, 144 species are included in the scheme. A total of 82 Colonial Cards were received covering: Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 2, Royal Spoonbill 1, Black-backed Gull 30, Red-billed Gull 18, Caspian Tern 18, White-fronted Tern 11, Feral Pigeon 1.

There was a record number of Colonial Nest Record cards received this year, mainly from gull and tern-colony-visits organised by Ralph Powlesland and Richard Parrish. Apart from Don Hadden's huge contribution of 220 cards (mainly Black-backed Gull and Caspian Tern), there were disappointingly few ordinary cards submitted. The geographical spread of records is also very uneven, with main contributions from the Northland, Waikato, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago regions. The diversity of species was better than usual and some very detailed and valuable cards were received: of particular note were excellent cards for Fantails and Grey Warblers from Anton Habraken, and another good set of cards from Ralph Powlesland for Chatham Island Pigeons, and continued detailed records from nests in Erika Woodger's garden on the slopes of Mt Egmont, and from Bruce Mackereth on the Coromandel Peninsula. The major contributors, in terms of numbers of cards, were Don Hadden (220), Richard Parrish (68), Ralph Powlesland (41) and Anton Habraken (25).

Information from the Nest Record Scheme has been used by Barrie Heather and myself in writing the new field guide, and also by several authors of texts for Volume 3 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Data on

Morepork, parakeets and Goldfinches have been used by OSNZ members preparing papers. More progress has been made on computerising Nest Record data. Mary Powlesland has written a programme to input nest record data onto the computer, and is now testing this with data on a number of species. Her work has been supported by the very generous assistance from the Science Committee of the Lottery Grants Board.

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

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS IN 1994/95.

B.D. Bell, R. Bell, Rogan Colbourne, David Cornick, Reg Cotter, Geoff de Lisle, Bev Elliott, Raewyn Empson, Enfys Graham, Tim Grant, Anton Habraken, Don Hadden, Hazel Harty, Paddy Latham, David Lawrie, Bruce Mackereth, Colin Miskelly, Ron Moorhouse, Jim O'Malley, Richard Parrish, Mary & Ralph Powlesland, Gwenda Pulham, Peter Reese, Hugh & Lea Robertson, A., John and Stella Rowe, Paul Sagar, Colin Scadden, Peter Schweigman, Greg Sherley, Jack Taylor, Mona Taylor, T. Taylor, Chrissy Wickes, Erika Woodger, Gavin Woodward, P. Zumbach.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN 1994/95.

Little Spotted Kiwi 2, Great Crested Grebe 1, Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 2, Reef Heron 6, Royal Spoonbill 11, Mute Swan 1, Black Swan 17, Canada x Feral Goose 1, Paradise Shelduck 1, Mallard 2, N.Z. Scaup 1, Australasian Harrier 1, California Quail 1, Pheasant 1, Banded Rail 2, Pukeko 2, S.I Pied Oystercatcher 3, Variable Oystercatcher 35, Pied Stilt 12, N.Z. Dotterel 6, Banded Dotterel 8, Spur-winged Plover 19, Black-backed Gull 110, Red-billed Gull 18, Caspian Tern 91, White-fronted Tern 12, Fairy Tern 10, N.Z. Pigeon 22, Feral Pigeon 1, Kaka 1, Morepork 2, Little Owl 1, Skylark 4, Welcome Swallow 11, N.Z. Pipit 1, Dunnock 3, Blackbird 8, Song Thrush 8, Fernbird 1, Grey Warbler 4, Fantail 6, N.Z. Robin 1, Silvereye 5, Tui 4, Chaffinch 2, Greenfinch 2, Goldfinch 1, Yellowhammer 1, House Sparrow 3, Starling 5.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Nest Record Scheme Convenor

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer 1994-1995

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes.

The OSNZ's main schemes have generally not been well supported in 1994. The Beach Patrol Scheme had the lowest number of kilometres covered since the 1960s (perhaps partially being caused by

the few wrecks being reported, and a land dispute preventing access to all of Muriwai beach), and although the Nest Record Scheme had a good number and diversity of cards submitted, this was mainly due to the contribution or organising efforts of just a few individuals. The Moulting Scheme continues to attract cards from only a small group of dedicated observers. With Lottery Grants Board support, Mary Powlesland has continued to develop programmes to allow the input and analysis of Nest Record Scheme data, and Ben Bell has had a student assist with the voluntary development and entry of Moulting Scheme data. The Beach Patrol computer was stolen during the year, but thanks to procedures put in place by Ralph and Mary Powlesland, the data were all backed up elsewhere and so virtually no data were lost.

2. Review of the Society's special national studies.

Wader census.

The biannual national wader census continues to operate well and the times that counts are being done and the coverage has improved, even if reporting in is rather slow, causing delays in finalising the national results. Paul Sagar is analysing the data collected over the first ten years of the study and is making this available to authors of the new field guide. The twice yearly counts are proving difficult for some regions to maintain and Paul Sagar and I believe that the time has come to stop the biannual national wader census and to monitor instead numbers of waders at a few key sites, and to repeat the biannual national counts at five or ten year intervals, now that we have established an excellent baseline.

Banded Dotterel movements.

Ray Pierce has now completed a third draft of a paper for *Notornis* on the results of his study. Because of a lack of data from Australia, he has decided to go ahead and publish this work on his own.

Black-fronted Dotterel movements.

A small number of dedicated people, now under the wing of Wayne Twydale, have been catching and colour-banding breeding birds, but they are fairly elusive to catch or sight.

Pied Stilt movements.

This project is going well in some regions, but poorly in others, still with a special need to band birds in Manawatu, Marlborough and North Canterbury.

Passerine movements.

The Central Passerine Group had another poor year, with most effort now concentrating on cage-trapping Silvereyes, Greenfinches and House Sparrows, although Dave Sim, Rob Schuckard and Jack Taylor continue to operate mist nets. The longest distance recovery this year was

a House Sparrow which moved from Hawera to near Raetihi (90 km), and several old birds (4+ years) were recaptured or reported dead. Morphometric data from this study are being included in the new field guide.

Kereru display dives.

The data collection phase of this study ended in June 1990 and I have finally made a start on analysing the results. This species is becoming of greater concern to the Department of Conservation as numbers continue to decline on the mainland.

Royal Spoonbill census.

Good surveys of the country were completed in winter 1994 and on 6 February 1995. Royal Spoonbills are really establishing themselves nationally, with breeding being confirmed at Parengarenga, Kapiti Island and Invercargill Estuary in the last couple of seasons. Sightings of colour-banded birds are still being reported by a few OSNZ members (with especially detailed records from Ray Clough at Mangere), but many members have either stopped looking for bands or stopped reporting them. Now that birds are being banded at two sites in New Zealand, it is important not to assume that all colour-banded birds have come from Vernon Lagoons. Bill Cash and I plan to prepare a summary of the dispersion of Royal Spoonbills from the Vernon Lagoon colony for *Notornis*.

Gull and tern colonies.

Detailed counts of gull and tern colonies were carried out in the Wellington and Wairarapa regions, Chatham Island, Northland and some other regions. It is planned that this will expand to the whole country this coming breeding season.

3. Advice on projects.

Through the year I have been called upon to give some advice on several local or individual projects being mooted by members, or projects that are nearing the analysis phase, and I have helped one member with the statistical analysis of their data. However, my time has been taken up with writing the new field guide and so I have not had as much time as I would have liked to assist in this area. Although I could not take part in the Chatham wader census, I helped to organise the logistics of this project.

4. New Studies.

Bird distribution mapping scheme.

I have been working with Duncan Cunningham of the Information Services Unit of the Department of Conservation to advance our proposal to repeat the bird distribution mapping scheme. The Department of Conservation is keen to work with the OSNZ on this scheme and are likely to provide the computing and database handling expertise needed for this major project; they have allocated some of Duncan's time to investigating the computer requirements and developing a

full proposal. The OSNZ now has to decide what information it is capable of contributing and adopt this as a major new scheme to run for approximately five years.

White Cockatoo survey.

Andrew Styche, a Victoria University student and OSNZ member, has asked the OSNZ Council to formally endorse a nationwide survey of cockatoos (White Cockatoos, Galahs and any others), which he will coordinate and write up as part of his PhD studies.

5. Contact with New Zealand organisations.

No new Lottery Board grants were sought in 1994. The Lottery Grants Board chose one of our projects (the publishing of the Fleming Memorial issue as a special supplement to *Notornis*) to randomly check to see if their money was being used as we had stated in our grant application. I met one of their officials and they seemed very happy with the product and they way the OSNZ operates and presents itself in a professional manner.

6. Applications for funds from the Project Assistance Reserve.

Grants approved in 1994 were -

\$500 - Brown - nest predation study
\$1400 - Robertson - ecology of Kakerori
\$490 - Booth - Little Shearwater study
\$900 - Waikato - Grey-faced Petrel study
\$1000 - Chatham wader census
\$300 - Pierre - South Island Saddleback
\$400 - Schweigman - Royal Spoonbill banding
\$1200 - gull and tern survey - ex Wintle legacy

HUGH ROBERTSON
Field Investigation Officer

Moult Recording Scheme

The New Zealand Bird Moult Recording Scheme was first launched by the OSNZ in 1981 (*OSNZ News* 19). As noted at the time, the moulting patterns of New Zealand birds are generally not well known, despite moult being a major and recurring part of the life cycle of all species.

Over the past fourteen years a steady stream of records on New Zealand bird moult have been received, comprising a total of 1673 records for 103 species. About half of these (833) refer to birds in active moult. The rest refer to non-moulting birds - such records are also important since they help delimit the age and season of moulting.

Just over half (52.4%) of records refer to living birds, the rest mostly to specimens held in New Zealand museums. The top six species of birds in moult are House Sparrow (297), Silvereye (136), Australasian Harrier (32), Banded Dotterel, Grey Warbler and Chaffinch (all 23).

The success of the scheme has been largely due to the efforts of a few observers,

perhaps because accurately recording moult is fairly complex compared, say, to filling in a nest record card or collecting birds from a beach. Despite this, moult can be a fascinating and rewarding way of observing the changes in birds' plumages and we *still need many, many more records*. Some New Zealand species remain poorly documented; indeed for many we still have no moult records at all. Beach patrollers, banders, visitors to museum collections, in fact any systematic observer can contribute - and we hope more will do so in the years ahead. The following have made contributions to date (no. of records in brackets):

D.S. Melville (699), D.J. Onley (344), Ben D. Bell (291), B.J. Gill (118). P.M. Sagar (106), H.A. Robertson (24), M.J. Taylor (23), R.A. Empson (17), R. Guest (17), M. & D. Bell (15), S. Lauder (10), D. Bettesworth (4), R.G. Powlesland (2), J.M. Hawkins (1) and R.D. Riley (1).

56 of the specimens examined from New Zealand came from overseas. These comprised 29 Pacific Golden Plover, 5 Turnstone, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 3 Red-necked Stint, 2 Whimbrel, 3 Bristle-thighed Curlew, 3 Bar-tailed Godwit, 9 Wandering Tattler and 1 White-capped Noddy. These birds came from China (2), Japan (4), Indonesia (1), Papua New Guinea (1), the Solomon Islands (1), Niue (34) and other Pacific islands (13).

Over the past few months we have fully updated the records on the mainframe computer database at Victoria University. Kim McConkey, with the assistance of Gurusingham Sathiyandra, has revised the older programme that Christine Reed first wrote in 1986. The summaries and analyses have been handled using an updated version of the SAS statistical package.

As well as these computational changes, we have also revised the Moult Card and the accompanying Moult Summary Form. The latter is now used only for birds not in moult and will be called the Non-Moult Summary Form. We hope that recorders will find these new formats simpler to use. They order the records in a way more appropriate for inputting the data onto the computer.

Back up files of the moult data are held at Victoria University of Wellington, and if funding is available we plan to develop customised summary and analysis routines for both PC and Macintosh personal computers. This will allow better dissemination of selected moult data to interested ornithologists. Analyses of the moult patterns in two of the passerines - House Sparrow and Silvereye - have already started. More data are needed on most species so *please contribute to the scheme if you can!* The new moult cards and non-moult forms should be available by mid year.

BEN BELL/KIM McCONKEY

J.S. Watson Conservation Trust

This trust is administered by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ (Inc.). Applications are invited from individuals or conservation groups for financial assistance for conservation projects over the 1995/96 year.

The criteria for assistance are:

- the conservation of plants and animals and natural features of New Zealand
- the advancement of knowledge in these matters by way of research, literary contribution, essay or articles, or other effort
- general; education of the public to give them an understanding and love of the earth in which they live.

A total of \$15,000.00 is available. It may be awarded to one or more applicants, or held over for a subsequent year.

For further information and application forms, write to the Secretary, Forest and Bird, P.O. Box 631, Wellington. **Applications close 31 July.**

CSN - a reminder

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

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

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

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

Auckland: Brenda Greene, ARC Regional Parks, Private Bag 92012, Auckland.

South Auckland: Pam Agnew, 3 Dianne-Louise Drive, Bucklands Beach, Auckland, Ph. (09) 535 4222.

Waikato: David Riddell, Gordonton Road, Taupiri R.D.1, Ph. (07) 834 3877.

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

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

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

Taranaki: Erika Woodger, Egmont Road, R.D. 6, Inglewood, Ph. (06) 752 2524.

Manawatu: Ian Andrew, 6 Eton Place, Palmerston North, Ph. (06) 358 1183.

Wanganui: Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson Street, Aramono, Wanganui, Ph. (06) 343 9992.

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

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

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

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

Marlborough: Beverley North, P.O. Box 341, Blenheim, Ph. (03) 578 8585.

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

Canterbury: Amanda Freeman, 2/527 Cashel Street, Christchurch 1, Ph. (03) 381 2005.

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

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

Special offer - Marine Ornithology

In a special offer to new personal and institutional subscribers, for double the cost of the normal 1995 subscription to Volume 23 of *Marine Ornithology*, new subscribers will also receive five years' of back numbers (Vols 18-22, 1990-1994). *Marine Ornithology* is the only international, fully refereed journal dealing solely with seabirds, and thus should be on the shelves of all marine ornithologists.

Payment should be made in the name of the "African Seabird Group" and sent to P.O. Box 34113, Rhodes Gift 7707, South Africa.

Special offer for the 1990-1995 issues of *Marine Ornithology*:

Personal - US\$60.00 or UK pound 40.00
Institutional - US\$90.00 or UK pound 60.00

Most earlier back numbers are also available. Direct enquiries to the above address.

JOHN COOPER
Editor

Birds of Polynesia

Readers may be interested to learn that I am compiling a cassette series of the islands of the Pacific under the title of *Birds of Polynesia*. The first tape, which is now undergoing final editing, features species from Henderson Island, Ducie Atoll and Oeneo Atoll (all in the Pitcairn group), the Cook Islands, Christmas Island (Kiribati), Niue, Tonga, Western Samoa, Fiji and Rotuma, and is available at a cost of \$15.00 (post and packaging included in New Zealand). A second volume will feature

material from French Polynesia, and places such as the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia, to name a few.

While some of the field recordings used for these cassettes are the result of my own efforts, many are from private collections that have kindly been made available to me for use in this project.

Any readers/researchers who may have suitable recordings are asked to contact me at the address below so that suitable arrangements may be made. Material is requested from any part of the Pacific region, particularly from areas rarely visited by researchers or others. It is known that in the 1970s expeditions went to Fiji and that recordings were made. What happened to these recordings?

LES MCPHERSON
P.O. Box 21 083
Christchurch

Donations

Donations are always gratefully received, and thank you to the following people: K.W. Buchanan, Bill Campbell, Mike & Sharon Graham, Chris Bindon, J.M. & T.A. Keene, Raelene Berry, Martin Maguire, Raymond Carney, Marie Neverman, Cheryl Doyle, Gretchen Rasch, W.F.L. Hunt.

Donations are tax-deductible and receipts are issued if requested.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

New Members

The society would like to welcome all new members who have joined from the beginning of 1995 to the present. We would also like to welcome back those who have rejoined after an absence.

New Zealand - Mavis Benfell, Kate Richardson, Sharyn Hellyer, Tony Wilson & Carol Harker, Eric & Claire Burt, Gregory Kerr, A.G. Hocken, Barry J. Stevens, Jeannie Preddy, Jamie Wood, Andrew Styche, Jonathon Powell, Kim McConkey, Rachel McClellan, William L.J. Ringer, Ken Robinson, Jacinda Amey, Ailsa Harrison, Helen Donaldson, D.E. Dawson, Madge C. Hows, Mark McFadden, Jung Sook-Hee, Joseph R. Waas, Balfour Library, Prof. W.R. Philipson, Mrs A.F. Gordon, Taranaki Museum, P.G. McGahan, Marie Smith, Raymond Carney, Neville Todd, Robin Bush, Christina Gibbons, Emma Neill, Dr Mildred Funk, Audrey Williams, Bruce Postill, Cheryl Doyle, J.M. & T.A. Keene, Barrie Allom, Regina Grabow, Robert Hitchcock, Jean Horsley, Pauline King, Raelene Berry, M.W.L. Sadlier, Nadine Parker, Mr & Mrs Bannister, Christopher Garden, Vincent Allott, Carole Long, Tim Markwell, D.R. Carter, Frances Schmechel, W.F.I. Hunt, and Science Fair winners for 1995 Stephen Fountain,

Francesca Cunninghame, Rebecca McLeod, Melissa Drake, Malcolm Rutherford, Cameron Jones.

Overseas - Bibliothek Natuurlijke Histori (Netherlands), South Australian Museum (Adelaide), Elsevier - Geo Abstract (UK).

Comments from Members

According to the Constitution, members unable to attend an AGM have the right to submit written comments regarding notices of motion for consideration at the AGM. The following comments have been drawn from the impressive submissions sent in by members from as far afield as Germany and Hong Kong, and are a testament to the health of the society. Many related to the proposal of having a new category of membership, which could elect not to receive Notornis. As the President has indicated in this issue, copies have been sent to RRs and are available for consultation as part of the current review process.

"The OSNZ is for the study of birds. By definition study should include the publication of results. Supporting the journal is...helping to fulfil our society's obligation to make the results of our research freely available"

"... the education of members is one of the essentials of the Society"

"... Professor Ernst Mayr at Harvard University... reads *Notornis* as soon as it arrives on his desk, and indeed looks forward to its arrival."

"The ordinary (subscription)-rate of \$40 is very good value"

"We are supporting the society in all its functions and commitments, surveys and investigations."

"OSNZ is a scientific organisation held in high regard by kindred world bodies."

"...we produce the journal not just for those current members who like to read it but, perhaps more importantly, to preserve the results of contemporary research for the benefit of future generations of ornithologists, both here and overseas."

"... without a journal we are much more likely to be perceived (rightly or wrongly) as an amateur birdwatchers' club than as a Society promoting the scientific study of birds."

"... there are many who rank among its members who are not experts but are very enthusiastic and the society is reliant on them for its results."

"There are other organisations whose goals are the enjoyment and protection of New Zealand's wildlife (including the birds), but no other was formed especially to promote the study of birds in their natural environment."

Mystery Bird # 19

Mystery birds #19 are obviously terns, with a slender pointed bill, long wings and tail, and black cap characteristic of many species in that group. Terns have featured prominently in this Mystery Bird slot, reflecting their tendency to wander widely and look similar to each other (!) so hopefully people will be used to recognising them as such. These birds show a medium tone bill with dark tip, pale grey underparts, darker grey upperparts, but a white tail. While the wings aren't displayed well, both birds show a back outer vane to the outer primary feather, with grey webs on the other vane and feathers. The bird on the right also seems to show a contrast between the fifth primary from the outside and the fourth, which is noticeably darker. The legs are medium dark only, and rather long. The posture of the birds and the fish in the bill of the left bird suggests that this might be a courtship display, which implies that they are about to breed.

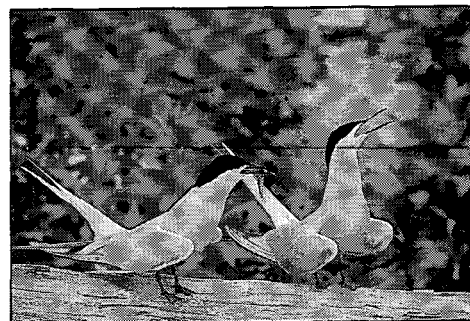
So, do these birds fit the bill (so to speak) of any of our breeding terns? There are only three species breeding on or around New Zealand that have a black cap extending down to the bill: Caspian, Black-fronted and Antarctic. However, only one of these has a two-toned bill. This species, the Caspian Tern, has a bill that is vast in comparison with the bills shown on these birds. So perhaps our reviewer has decided to have some fun and toss in an unexpected slide from elsewhere? Other black-capped Asian species - Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns - are ruled out on bill colour (and size of the former). So perhaps a distant species? Both Arctic and Common Terns are on the NZ list, but Arctic Terns have an all red bill, while the Commons recorded in NZ have had dark bills, even in breeding plumage. Are there any variants of any species which might explain this? Not for the local species certainly.

What about Roseate Tern which occurs in Australia, and possesses many of the features found in these birds? This can be removed from contention by the primary feather pattern - Roseate having darkish primaries with a white line bordering the inside vane - and the bill colour - while Roseate bills can have a red base, it would be exceptional for this to be so extensive. Besides which, even I would be reluctant to thrust a totally new bird onto you for identification!

There is one species which does vary in appearance over its range - Common Tern. This tern breeds widely across to northern hemisphere, and shows much regional variation, especially in bill colour. Indeed, it is the eastern birds that have dark bills, presumably being those birds we get in New Zealand. In other parts of their range they have a two-toned bill: red base and back tip. Given this knowledge, it becomes easy to show that these birds are in fact Common Terns. In fact, this two-

toned bill colouration is found in only a few terns, which, combined with the fact that the bill is slender is almost enough to confirm the species. The other plumage details also accord with Common - long white tail, long legs, grey upperparts and pale grey underparts. Another characteristic of Common Tern in breeding plumage is found with the primaries, in which there is a contrast between the paler inner primaries and the darker outer feathers, which can easily be seen in flight. So we actually have a pair of Common Terns from somewhere other than eastern Asia.

Any suspicions that these were breeding I can confirm: the male on the left is offering a fish (a small herring) to the female on the right on a small island in the USA. But it should be noted that for much of the year Common Terns look very much like Arctic Terns, so any Common Tern (as the Common/Arctic type is called) in the non-breeding season (which is when most New Zealand records occur) will be much harder to identify. While not going into plumage differences, there are some important structural details that can be noted here. The first is the leg length, which is long in Common and short in Arctic. A fluffed up Arctic standing can appear to be almost resting on its belly. The second is the head shape - a low angled



forehead is found on the Common and a steeper forehead on Arctic. So apologies for having thrown in a slightly odd pair, but this illustrates an important birdwatching principal: expect the ordinary, but be prepared for the unexpected!

PHIL BATTLETT

Erratum: Phil Battley's item on the IOC conference contained a typo. - p.5 of *OSNZ News* 74, centre column, line 20 'natural genes' should read 'neutral genes'. Genetic engineering hasn't come so far that we need to distinguish between natural and unnatural genes just yet!

Mystery Bird quiz

The first round of the 1995-96 competition started with fewer people than usual attempting the quiz.

We could do with some more starters to put some pressure on those who are chasing the very worthwhile prize, ie. free

annual subscription to the Society worth \$40.00. There's a long way to go yet. Try guessing Birds D, E and F and send your entries to me today.

Now to the identifications -

A - Grey Warbler. Most participants guessed correctly although Dunnock was also mentioned.

B - Variable Oystercatcher chick. This was photographed on Pakiri Beach many years ago. Banded Dotterel and SIPO were also mentioned.

C - Little Tern. Photographed on Bougainville Island.

At the time of writing, Pam Agnew and Peter Langlands have all three correct, but five others have two right.

Best of luck with D, E and F.

DON HADDEN
P.O. Box 6054
Christchurch 8030



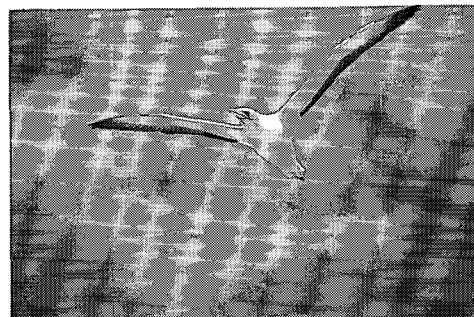
D



E



F



Mystery Bird # 20

Identify this bird. Answer next issue

UK Wetlands Conference

An international conference, jointly sponsored by the British Ornithologists' Union and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, entitled 'Waterbirds and Wetlands: putting sustainability into practice' will take place in the UK in 1996.

Recreation on and around wetlands is now more widespread and intensive than ever before, to the extent that it is often the principal threat to their conservation value. Increasing human populations and/or affluence in many countries can only mean that this problem will increase. To achieve sustainability, recreational needs have to be integrated into the conservation of biodiversity.

The aim of this international conference is to synthesise the current scientific understanding of the effects of recreational activities (eg. hunting, fishing, watersports and informal recreation) on wetlands, to formulate solutions to specific problems and to consider how these may be consolidated within wider ecosystem management activities.

In addition to the production of a standard proceedings, the aim is to produce a practitioner's guide to sustainable recreation on and around wetlands.

The conference will be held at Wills Hall, Bristol, UK, from 19-21 April 1996. Offers of abstracts for posters and papers should not exceed 400 words and should be sent to Jeff Kirby, The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL12 7BT, UK. Booking enquiries should be sent to Graeme Greene, British

Ornithologists' Union, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 6AP, UK.

US Penpal

I am a 43 year old teacher and a birdwatcher. Our whole family enjoys birds, especially my eight year old son.

I'm very interested in New Zealand (culture, history, etc.) and could share information with a like-minded individual about the 'average life' in the US. We live in southern Illinois now, but we're from Chicago.

Would anybody be interested in corresponding with us?

PS. I'm a lot more interesting than I'm letting on!

BONNY MURPHY
2457 Old Highway,
Makanda, Illinois 62958, USA.

Reviews

A Supplement to Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World, by Charles G. Sibley and Burt L. Munroe Jr, 1993. Yale University Press, Newhaven and London. 108 pp. ISBN 0-300-05549-8. Price US\$25.00.

Includes changes in distribution and taxonomy, and corrections to the original text of Sibley and Munroe's influential, but

controversial, *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World* (1990, Yale University Press). Part I of the supplement lists changes in systematics that affect classification, scientific name changes, English name changes, or changes in the sequence of species. Part II lists changes in text, including the table of contents, list of world numbers, gazetteer, index, and the changes in systematics mentioned in Part I.

A World Checklist of Birds, by Burt L. Monroe Jr and Charles G. Sibley, 1993. Yale University Press, Newhaven and London. ISBN 0-300-05547-1. Price US\$45.00 (hardback).

This is the revised checklist as updated by the supplement. It contains the Latin and English names of the 9,702 species in Sibley & Munroe (1990), with an abbreviated description of geographic distribution. Well-marked subspecies that have been considered to be species in the recent past, or may be so recognised in the future, are also listed. A box for checking off species observed in the field and space for brief notes are also provided.

The Birds of Nigeria, by J.H. Elgood et al., 1994. British Ornithological Union Checklist No. 4 (second edition), B.O.U., Tring. 306 pp. Price GBP23.00 (overseas) including postage.

The third B.O.U. checklist to be completely revised, this volume has introductory chapters covering the history of Nigerian ornithology, its geography, geology, climate and vegetation. Other chapters deal with migration and breeding. Attention is drawn to the work of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation in encouraging the establishment of reserves throughout the country. There are sixteen colour plates of habitat and 48 of Nigerian birds. The systematic list covers every species reliably recorded (884) in Nigeria, with the addition of thirty new species since 1981.

KEITH WOODLEY

Regional Round-up

Northland

Field activities have been varied this last three months and so have the results. The ever popular beach patrolling has been covering the ground each month, but bird numbers have been low. In fact, on one patrol only one bird was found in 44 kms. Our Pouto Lake survey in February ran into problems this year. Although held as usual on the weekend closest to 20 February, the farms in the area were having a Paradise Shelduck cull that same weekend and we were not allowed to go to many of the lakes that we normally cover. Most thoughtless of them to have it that weekend! However instead of going home early on the Sunday, we went on an exciting 4WD bus-truck trip along the

beach from Pouto Point to Round Hill, which took us through the tide in one rocky part near the Kaipara lighthouse, where we had to dodge eagle rays in the warm shallows. We also saw the rotting remains of a sperm whale, washed ashore a couple of weeks after the fast ferry hit a whale on its delivery voyage to New Zealand. It had a large chunk out of its back.

March was a busy month, with the Whangarei and Kaipara Harbour surveys, a trip to Miranda for some wader watching trespassing on South Auckland's patch and the 'Great Northland Bird Race'. Five people went on the Miranda trip and bird numbers were apparently lower than hoped for, but I do not have any details of what was seen. On the "Great Northland Bird Race" we put a 200 km limit on the total distance travelled this year. The "What's What?" team won it with 49 species.

We've had two evening meetings recently, in March and April, where the topics were the Northland Regional Coastal Plan and the Conservation Management Strategy.

Interesting birds currently around are our winter Royal Spoonbill flock at Port Whangarei and a White Heron at Waipu. Australasian Little Grebes have colonised several small lakes near Hikurangi and Whangarei, and Tomtits are expanding their Northland range (Ray Pierce even mist-netted a female Tomtit in his backyard).

Skull Creek is the place to see Whimbrels, with a high of 36 seen there in March by Gavin Grant and Pauline Smith. From December to February a Common Sandpiper was around, first spotted by Mike Twyman.

(Pat Miller)

Auckland

24 members attended our March meeting during which I gave a talk and slide show of an eight day birding trip to Cairns and north-east Queensland with Pam and Des Agnew and Keith Woodley late last year. Luckily, enough of my photos came out to make up a presentation and two of my fellow travellers were present to lend their support.

Last month Adrian Reigen showed us video footage taken during his recent trip to Japan. The reasons for his visit were threefold: firstly to attend the international workshop and symposium on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in the east Asian - Australasian flyway, which took place at Kushiro on the northernmost island of Hokkaido, at which he was the sole New Zealand representative. Secondly, to check on the progress of the harbour reclamation project at Hakata Bay, Fukuoka which, sadly, is racing ahead with little regard to the damaging effects such a monstrous development will doubtless cause. The third reason of course was to indulge in a

little birding which must have been a tonic after Hakata Bay.

Video made a welcome change from the usual slides, especially when we were treated to film of such megabirds as Steller's Sea Eagle. On a slightly different note we were also shown snippets from visits to Brisbane, the Mai Po Marshes in Hong Kong and, closer to home, our Black-billed Gull banding project on the Manukau Harbour. We thank Adrian for a most interesting and informative evening.

Other than our regular beach patrols we have had little in the way of large group outings, opting instead for individual or small group field trips. As a result numerous interesting sightings have been reported from throughout our region. Some examples - twelve gannets were seen inside the Puhirihiri Inlet, a good distance inland and away from the open sea. At nearby Conifer Grove is a lone White Heron which has been present since 18 February.

At Miranda the Broad-billed Sandpiper was last reported on 9 March when it was beginning to assume its breeding plumage. Three or possibly four Terek Sandpipers were seen on 15 April and a single Grey-tailed Tattler on the 25th. The Little Egret seen on 21 April was performing well again for the numerous people who watched it feeding on small fish at high tide between Access Bay and the Limeworks on 7 May, and eleven Cattle Egrets back again at Piako were first seen on 18 April.

A very notable sighting at Miranda on 8-April was of a bittern seen flying from around the entrance of the Trust Centre. Imagine then the surprise when, on 13 April, a bittern (presumably the same individual) was spotted standing by and slowly walking around the Widgery Lake, literally metres away from the lucky few inside the building. Furthermore the bird was completely out in the open and so allowed an amazing view of a normally shy and inconspicuous species.

Sightings of Black-billed Gulls wearing yellow leg bands are coming in thick and fast. All these birds are from the colony at Kidds on the Manukau Harbour, so the small numbers seen around Weymouth and Wattle Downs have not moved far since dispersing, unlike the 54 individuals counted at Miranda on 4 March. Although by far the largest single count, it still constitutes less than 25% of the total number banded so we hope to find more soon.

The three overstaying Glossy Ibis at Aka Aka were joined by a fourth bird of unknown origin around the middle of April, and a remarkable count of thirty New Zealand Dotterel at Auckland International Airport will no doubt excite any keen overseas birders who now stand a good chance of seeing their first endemic before even leaving the plane!

Finally, a brief mention of our beach patrolling which still takes place monthly along South Auckland's west coast. Although the total number of wrecks found so far is down on the same time last year, we have been lucky enough to find two firsts for the Kariotahe stretch. In March a Long-tailed Skua was picked up which coincides nicely with a report of a live bird of the same species seen at the Piako River in February, and last month (April) a White-chinned Petrel was found and positively identified with the aid of measurements taken. They say things happen in threes, so we eagerly await our third first in May!

(Paul Harrison)

Waikato

Our year began with a spoonbill census on 6th February, but Waikato has to record a "nil" count, even though there were three and four birds seen in the area on the days before and after the census. There are currently 21 spoonbills present at Kawhia, so we wait to see if that number grows to exceed the 31 that wintered there last year.

The most exciting bird to be seen in our region lately has to be the female Nankeen Kestrel that has taken up residence at the home of one of our country members. It has been seen most days since mid-April, roosting on fences and telegraph poles, and at night on the downpipe under the eaves of the house!

A field trip to Whangamarino to look for water birds in March was disappointing bird-wise but we all gained in historical knowledge as we visited some of the old military redoubts nearby where DoC staff explained the significance of the sites to Maori and early settlers. Swamp birds were very elusive, with only a single Fernbird being seen. There were no sightings of Australasian Bittern, Spotless Crake or Marsh Crake in any of the areas they have been seen in previously. Perhaps we would have more luck in the spring.

The Mapara field trip was a real delight, with the group obtaining excellent views of eleven Kokako, including a pair with three full-fledged young. The juveniles were clearly distinguishable by their pinkish-mauve wattles. Another pair, Pili and Opiki (all the birds have great names) we watched for some time as the male constantly and delicately fed the female with ripe berries. Perhaps this was consolation as they had recently lost a nest to a predator.

We were introduced to predator control the hard way when we came upon a live ferret caught by a claw in a trap. After it was hastily dispatched, Phil Bradfield produced a few more deep frozen predators from his pack so we could see what the birds and the bush have to contend with. The effect of the recently stepped-up control programme is reflected in the large

amounts of fruit, flowers and foliage now visible in this recovering forest remnant. We heartily recommend Mapara as a field trip destination.

A pre-shooting census of Lake Waahi coincided with "marking day" for the shooters, which made the birds rather shy and difficult to count. Numbers of most species were less than last year.

Cattle Egrets have been arriving in dribs and drabs since the first bird arrived at Rangiriri at the beginning of March. At the end of April there were 80 present, but no wing-tagged birds have been seen so far.

Waikato's April AGM, with very full reports from the co-ordinators of our projects and census work, was rounded off by Brian Chudleigh's wonderful slides of NW Australian waders. With some new faces on our large committee we look forward to another rewarding year of bird study in our region.

(Bev Woolley)

Taranaki

Some bird behaviours have featured in our records over the first few months of 1995.

A sparrow nest was blown out of a tree by high winds. While the nest was lying on the ground, the parents continued feeding the two surviving chicks inside it. Two days later they fledged.

Two mynas were seen repeatedly swooping down on a hedgehog, calling loudly until it completed its journey across the lawn and disappeared into a hedge.

Shining Cuckoos were seen being fed by Grey Warblers by two of our members on several occasions.

One of our members observed the feeding of three Morepork fledglings over a period of time.

A pigeon was observed feeding successfully in spite of having an upper mandible twice as long as the lower mandible.

The Methanex plant was host to a Spine-tailed Swift at the end of December last year (see *OSNZ News* No. 74) and a breeding colony of Black-backed Gulls, Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts have also been seen there.

Other Taranaki records were a Kokako in the Waitaanga Forest, three sightings of White Herons, one of two Rooks and one of a Kaka.

(Erika Woodger)

Wellington

Our mapping scheme, Mana Island Pukeko project, and passerine banding are all under way.

A second and third trip to Kapiti Island have gone ahead to count kiwi calls. The involves getting yourself to one of the four counting stations (the furthest of

which is a good ninety minutes vertical clamber from Rangatira), arming yourself against rain and wind, and then settling down to enjoy two hours in the one spot straining to detect kiwi calls amongst all the Moreporks, Wekas, Long-tailed Cuckoos and the occasional insomniac Kaka or NZ Robin.

When a kiwi is heard (and even that can give rise to some disagreement among the team), you have to decide its species (Brown or Little Spotted) and sex as well as estimate its compass bearing and distance. While the team is hotly debating each of these issues (especially the compass bearing) you can be sure that another kiwi will call. The record for not hearing anything is the full two hour period.

When the count is complete it is a simple matter of returning to the nearest hut. If you are lucky enough to be at Seismometer hut this involves no more than negotiating the ladder down from the roof of the hut. But if you are at the junction of the Trig and McKenzie tracks, you are in for a descent of up to an hour down a pitch black track illuminated by glowworms. With luck you will be back in the whare by 12.30 am.

In February Kerry Oates outlined to members the wader survey he led to the Chathams in November, followed by activities he got up to after the rest of the OSNZ team had left for the mainland - monitoring nests of Chatham Island Pigeons and checking Taiko burrows for any sign of breeding success. Ralph Powlesland carried on with the Chatham Islands theme in March with an outline of the highly successful Chatham Island Pigeon recovery plan. As at the end of last year the population is estimated at between 150 to 200 individuals. In April Chris Robertson described the origin and antecedents of the Banding Office. The official non-game-bird scheme was begun in New Zealand in 1950, mainly to ensure coordination of all the activities then current. He produced two necklaces of bands of every conceivable size, shape and colour. About 1.13 million birds have been banded under official schemes in New Zealand. The recovery rate has been 14.8% - very high by international standards. This figure breaks down into 25% of game-birds and 10% of others.

(Adapted from the Wellington region newsletter, April 1995)

Canterbury

Field trips this year have been well attended by members. In April we farewelled the waders at Lake Ellesmere and finished with a barbecue at Colin Hill's farm. Our Little Stint (now confirmed, with some good photos of the bird - we hope the Rare Birds Committee agrees!) kindly made its last appearance. Great Crested Grebes have started to arrive at

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Lake Forsyth - 10% of the population winters there. Silvereye banding has begun in the apple orchards and will continue while the apples are there.

Evening meetings have been well attended, the first for the year being a members' night with a bird quiz being organised by Tony Crocker. Mark Sanders updated us on work on Black Stilts in March, and in April we were privileged to see a spectacular video on waders of the genus *Calidris*.

Birds seen include a Little Whimbrel at Lake Ellesmere, at least six Glossy Ibis, Rock Wren at Erewhon and Little Black Shags, all in April.

We have a few new members this year, including our youngest, Joshua Pari, who at seven years old has already attended two field trips. 12 Canterbury members have just returned from a wonderful AGM in Stewart Island - our grateful thanks to Lloyd Esler.

(Sheila Petch)

Otago

Passerine banding is under way again, with an initial 60 silvereyes and a Tomtit at Flagstaff Hill. The weather was perfect and

the birds willing to be trapped. For the first time the Otago region also clocked up over 200 Royal Spoonbills during the Waitangi Day census.

Banded spoonbills, Caspian Terns and Variable Oystercatchers have been providing records, and a banded Pied Stilt at Aramoana on 11 January was last seen in the Manukau Harbour on 9 May 1993.

Coastal breeding SIPOs were successful at the Kaikorai Estuary, and a pair with a downy chick was seen at

Cabbage Point in the Catlins. Fernbirds have been seen at Flagstaff and at Taieri Mouth, and NZ Falcons in the Roxburgh Gorge and near Arrowtown. Aramoana had a Siberian Tattler, a Far-eastern Curlew (with another at Taieri Mouth at the same time) and a probable Large Sand Dotterel. The Fortification Road ponds have had five Pectoral Sandpipers and a lone Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. A visiting English ornithologist reported an adult Great Crested Grebe on Otago Harbour in February.

(Peter Schweigman)

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