

# 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.

No. 76 September, 1995

Note Deadline for the December issue will be  
10th November.

## A Waikato Nankeen Kestrel

On 12 April an unusual bird was noticed (from the kitchen window) by eight year old Grant Galbreath, son of Waikato OSNZ members. The bird was sitting on a fence post on a misty morning, its tail feathers all fluffed up - perhaps still feeling the early morning cold - while the Galbreaths approached to within two metres of it. Since then it was seen daily, spending most of the time perched on poles and fence posts, which it used as lookout points from which to seek its prey. The surrounding area consists of gently rolling pasture land. At night the bird was found roosting on the bend of a downpipe under the eaves of the Galbreaths' house!

From a chosen vantage point, after staring purposefully at the ground for a few seconds, the kestrel would make a direct downward gliding flight, sometimes hovering above the spot on the ground for a moment or two, before dropping onto the ground and half folding its wings, as it searched for crickets which were present in near plague proportions at the time. With wings held slightly up and out, the bird appeared to prance about, until it managed to secure a cricket in its claw, when it would then fly directly back to the perch post. While standing on one foot, the other containing the prey was extended outward and upward to facilitate feeding. A cricket was always clutched firmly in the claw, as if held in a hand, with the head protruding and uppermost. It was quickly devoured from head to tail, the legs being cast off as the bird came to them.

Crickets seemed to form the bulk of the prey, although on one occasion it was observed by the Galbreaths eating a mouse.

After eating, the bird indulged in lengthy preening and cleaning sessions. At these times it was clear to observers that its outer primary wing feathers and its tail feathers

were considerably worn. The pale brown (nankeen) colour of the head and rump, and the brown tail with broad black band and white tip, identified the kestrel as a female *Falco cenchroides*. The kestrel was remarkably tolerant of human activity and could be approached to within a few metres. It stayed in the area for about three weeks, during which time it was observed and photographed by a number of Waikato, South Auckland and Bay of Plenty OSNZ members.

BEV WOOLLEY



Photo Bev Woolley

### Barrie Heather

Members will be greatly saddened to hear of the death of Barrie Heather on 15 August 1995 after a long illness. As an officer of the Society for many years and a mentor and friend to many members, Barrie provided us all with a fine example of service before self. Suitable tributes will appear in *Notornis* at a later date. The Society wishes to express its deepest sympathy to Rosemary and the family. Messages may be sent to 3 Park Road, Paraparaumu.

### More Hamilton Petrels

Once again Hamilton has played host to a rare petrel. On this occasion the live bird was a Black Petrel and it was found in a Matangi garden, southwest of Hamilton, on 19 June. Folkert Nieuwland picked up the bird and it was easily fed on fish strips. During its captivity the petrel was given an opportunity to swim, but it was noticed that it was unable to use one of its legs.

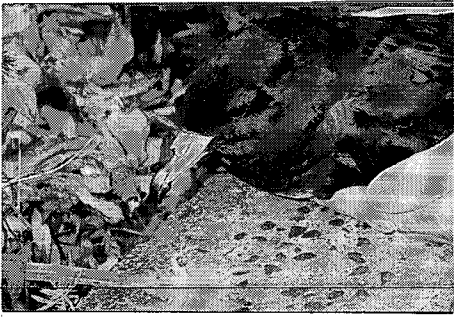
The bird was rescued a few days before the local OSNZ meeting. As the speaker that evening as from Auckland it was decided to send it to Auckland Bird Rescue. Sadly it died on the day of the meeting.

This is not the first Black Petrel record from the town. In June 1980 one was captured by a cat at the airport. Other Black Petrels were four examples in the Tokoroa region in 1965.

Following on from the Cook's Petrel found previously in Hamilton (*OSNZ News No. 72*), four Cook's Petrels were blown into the Waikato area in early April. One landed, gaining media attention, on top of a building adjacent to the Department of Conservation offices in Hamilton. The Fire Service retrieved the bird. A second bird was collected later that day from a Te Rapa garden, while a third was retrieved from Morrinsville the next week. These three were released at Mount Maunganui reserve after being fed on squid. It was noticed that while the others took readily to the squid, one bird required the pieces to be blended before it ate. The fourth Cook's Petrel flew (or was blown) into Orere Point and was released later at Miranda by the Centre Manager Keith Woodley.

Thank you to Folkert Nieuwland, Stella Rowe and Bev Woolley for verifying facts and figures.

PAUL CUMING



Black Petrel near Hamilton, June 1995.  
Photo Shirley Nieuwland

## NZ Dotterel nesting inland

On 5 December, I visited the tailings dam at the Martha Mine, near Waihi, to check on a report of NZ Dotterel nesting there. Sure enough, on top of the clay bank surrounding the dam, was a nest containing three eggs. One of the parents was a bird banded YR-YM at Opoutere on 11/1/91. This bird had been seen by Dave Wills earlier in the nesting season on Matakana Island, some 10 kms-distant. There were four or five other NZ Dotterel seen in the area on the same day.

On a second visit a week later, a second nest containing two eggs was found just a handspan away from the trackmarks of heavy earth moving machinery that roars around the area 24 hours a day. The whole area is floodlit for work at night. The ground in the area is rock hard, and so compacted that it was extremely difficult for the mine environmental officers to hammer a waratah standard into the earth to mark the position of the nest as a warning for vehicle drivers. The first bird

had situated its nest in a small mound of spoil placed against the edge of the dam, while the second was actually using a depression in the track pattern of a large bulldozer. As there was nothing else available the birds had gathered pea-sized pills of clay to line their nests.

The dam complex, covering about 100 ha., creates a huge mound, the lower slopes of which, having been returned to pasture land, are topped by a lake about 40 ha. in extent. From the air it could resemble an estuary, or a sandy beach. The actual surface of the lake about 3-4 m. below the rim is constantly fed a slurry of fine clay and water from a large main pipe which runs around the entire circumference of the lake. From this, feeder arms placed at about 50 m. intervals disperse slurry to the lake floor. These feeders can be switched on or off, according to where fill is required to keep the lake level constant. Except for areas where fill was being pumped in, the water appeared generally clean, but of a slightly cloudy, blue/green colour. A narrow mud "beach" extends from the water to the dam wall in several places. Where the mud had dried and cracked, small flying insects could be seen, and the patterns of dotterel footprints were very obvious.

The first nest hatched three eggs on 24/12/94 with two chicks surviving. On 28 December John Dowding and I caught the chicks and metal banded them. John also colour banded one adult from the second nest, BO-RM. A further colour-banded bird from Opoutere, YG-WM, did not appear to be nesting. On 31 December two chicks were seen, but by 2 January the parents had moved them to the far end of the dam to a grassed area. The second nest hatched three eggs on 6 January, but only two chicks were seen on 7 January. By 17 January the first pair and chicks had disappeared, while the second bird had only one chick left, which vanished after a few days.

Predators known to be in the area include rats, cats, stoats, possums, harriers and Moreporks. A variety of other birds also use the lake, including Black-backed Gull, Mallard and Spur-winged Plover. Three or four Banded Dotterels have also been seen feeding and roosting in the area. After the disappearance of the chicks the adult NZ Dotterels continued to frequent the area for a further week or so, apparently flying out to the coast about 10 km away to feed at low tide.

From mid-February on they have not been seen at the dam site. On 6 March, the three colour-banded adults were found roosting on the ocean beach at Pio Shores with a group of 18 unbanded birds.

BEV WOOLLEY

## From the President's Desk

Though I am writing this before the closing date for submissions for the Review of the Society's activities, there are already a good number gathering in my in-tray and the review team have had their first batch of material to consider - some innovative and stimulating ideas which will be a challenge to address. I have certainly heard of a good deal of discussion going on.

In any effective society there is an element of change happening all the time, as new projects, ideas and personnel come and go. One of the important parts of doing any of the necessary jobs within the Society is to ensure that there is always a replacement being fostered and encouraged to take over in the case of an unexpected need for someone to give up a job because of ill health or other commitments. Participation can be onerous at times, but members can always be helpful by doing their part towards the successful functioning of all activities, however small the offer may be. Don't always leave it to someone else to do. There are few parasites among the feathered bird community, but many examples of good cooperative group behaviour.

We should welcome and assist two new RRs - Doug Booth in Auckland and Peter Gaze in Nelson. Both bring a wealth of experience to their roles. Equally we must thank the retiring RRs Mike Graham and Jenny Hawkins for their time of leadership and their willingness to pass on the task while still continuing to participate in other ways.

Elsewhere in this issue of *OSNZ News* is a note about your Library and especially its very valuable collection of periodicals. One of the most important parts of any bird study is the maintenance, storage and presentation of the resultant observations in an accessible form. This is especially so when the membership is spread over such a wide area. This resource, like our own publications, is not only an important source of information, but also many ideas and techniques that may help with your own study. Many members are not able to access material at major towns and can make use of our own library for reading at home either on a regular or casual basis. The discussions between the Society and the Auckland Museum are designed to ensure that the Library is safely held and its use fostered.

As the Society gets older, and members retire from study or pass on, what is happening to their many records and observations in notebooks and cupboards? The Society is working towards having and fostering a national archive of ornithological records and materials which will be available as a source and comparison for those who study birds in the future. There will be a national ornithological collection based in a suitable archive institution (such as the National Library)

where people could donate their material to be held as records in their name, but catalogued within the ornithological collection. *Every member should consider this course of action, even if it is only for one small note, notebook or unusual photo etc.*

There is of course an archive of the official records of the Society. Now is the time to add your material before it is too late and we have lost a vital part of our national bird study record. I hope to be able to bring a progress report to you early next year. In the meantime, look at your records and write to me now, if you would like to donate your records to the archive. I am sure that we have already lost valuable material in the past. Please don't think that what you may have is too localised or unimportant, because you may just hold the key which unlocks a total piece of work in the future.

Any bird conservation efforts in the future can only be assisted by a good record of the past. The value of many of your contributions to national or local surveys is the investment capital upon which the researchers and managers of the future must base their decisions. Good decisions cannot be made without good data! Help ensure that your data are not lost. These personal records are just as important as library books and journals, because they are the building blocks upon which the study of birds is based. This may be the most important contribution to bird study that you make. Help your Society prepare the archive with a suitable institution. Don't wait, prepare for the future now, write and tell me that you wish to preserve some of our ornithological heritage!!

CHRISTOPHER ROBERTSON  
*President*

## Minutes - AGM 1995

The following are the Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at Stewart Island on 13 May 1995.

1. PRESENT. David Crockett (Acting President) and 94 members.
2. APOLOGIES. Apologies were accepted from 23 members (T. Dennison/R. Crockett)
3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES. As the minutes of the 1994 AGM and the October SGM were made available prior to the meeting, a motion was carried that the 1994 AGM minutes be adopted (M. Nee/A. Wright) and that the October SGM minutes be adopted (H. Robertson/G. Lovei). Two errors were noted in the AGM minutes: p.1 para. 6 should read Mercia Barnes, not

Marcia, and p.3 Junior Award should read Matthew Wong, not Long.

4. MATTER ARISING. The meeting endorsed by acclamation the award of Life Membership to Barrie Heather. The Meeting ratified the motion 'that the Editor of *Notornis* and the OSNZ Treasurer be appointed by OSNZ Council for a term of up to three years with full voting rights' (C. Robertson/T. Crocker).
5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT. A eulogy to Richard Sibson was given by Tim Lovegrove followed by a minute's silence held in memory of Richard Sibson (ex President and Editor), Mike Soper (author and photographer) and Ken Rowe (Christchurch, banding scheme).

The President's report had been circulated with the recent edition of *OSNZ News* so an update only was given by the Acting President.

*Falla Memorial Award* - this was awarded to Paul Sagar in recognition of his long service to the Society including *OSNZ News* editor, Council member and coordinator of the National Wader Census.

*Projects Assistance Fund* - three applications were approved by Council for: Grey-faced Petrel study, Kakerori research and the Chatham Island winter wader survey.

*National Wader Census* - this will be discontinued following with next winter count, except in a few key areas yet to be identified.

*Royal Spoonbill Census* - the Waitangi Day census will be discontinued, but the winter census will continue.

*Gull/tern count* - R. Powlesland commented on the difficulties in this new scheme (coverage) but indicated a \$5,000 legacy is available and could be used to obtain aerial coverage of Black-billed Gulls in the South Island; a meeting with interested members was to be held during the weekend to clarify priorities and actions.

*Cockatoo study* - a Victoria University student has approached Council for support of his study and members were requested to cooperate with A. Styche in his request for information.

*Sibson bequest* - Council are considering using this on a commemorative supplement to *Notornis* on waders and members were requested to forward comments/suggestions to the Secretary.

*Financial report* - having been circulated to members the meeting agreed that it be adopted (M. Nee/H. Robertson). M. Nee commented that he could see no need to raise the subs in the near future and that the supplement to *Notornis* had been funded from donations from the Fleming estate and members, and a grant from the Lottery Board. The meeting agreed that the Auditor (John Mallinson) be reappointed (M. Nee/H. Robertson).

The meeting endorsed the thanks of Council to all scheme convenors, RRs, office holders, committee members, coordinators and other active members of the Society for their contributions over the past year.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS. There was only one nomination for President so Mr Christopher Robertson was therefore elected unopposed. There were six nominations for four Council positions and an election was held. Mr Brian Bell, Mr Tony Crocker, Dr Hugh Robertson and Mrs Stella Rowe were elected following a count of the 184 ballot papers received. The meeting agreed that the ballot papers be destroyed (J. Hamilton/B. Woolley).

7. NOTICES OF MOTION. D. Crockett indicated that he wished to stand aside from the Chair since the Notices of Motion were from Northland. The meeting agreed with the recommendation that the new President take the Chair (D. Crockett/R. Empson).

There were 13 written submissions on the Notices of Motion from members unable to attend the AGM and these were read to the meeting prior to consideration of the Notices of Motion. Submissions were received from D. Melville (Hong Kong), A. Freeman (Christchurch), Dr W. Thiele (Germany), Dr P. Bull (Lower Hutt), R. Lambert (Taranaki), S. Chambers (Pukekohe), H. Clifford (Hamilton), J. Dowding (Auckland), Dr & Mrs R. Holdaway (Christchurch), F. Austen (Dunedin), W. Ringer (Whangarei), C. O'Donnell (Christchurch) and E. Burt (Whangarei).

1. The meeting accepted the proposal from the Chair that the AGM consider first the motion shown as No. 3 of the Notices of Motion previously circulated. C. Robertson outlined the Council's recommendation for a Review Committee to be established, comprising two current or former members of Council, one of the newly elected members, one or more lawyers and the President ex officio, and for the current constitution, terms of reference,

and invitation for submissions from members to be advertised in the next issue of *OSNZ News*. Council are to meet at the end of September to consider the recommendations of the Review Committee. Two other members (J. Hawken & R. Crockett) spoke in support of the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion

“That Council forthwith appoint a subcommittee to review the constitution generally and in particular consider membership and structure of regions, such subcommittee to report its recommendations to Council by the thirtieth day of September 1995” (J. Hawken/J. Hamilton) was carried.

2. The motion that the clause Section 12 (e) of the Constitution

“To appoint Regional Representatives for terms of one year at a time, so that such persons may organise the study of birds in collaboration with members in their regions, and may encourage members’ participation in all activities. Regional Representatives shall keep the Council informed of activities and all other matters of ornithological interest within their regions” be deleted and substituted under ‘Election of Officers’ Section 9 (e) by: “Regional Representatives be elected by an annual meeting of the members in each region for a term of three years with no second term except for an additional one year when necessary, making an absolute maximum of four years in office. Council will ratify or in exceptional circumstances have the power to veto a Regional Representative so elected” was tabled (H. Robertson/R. Empson) and spoken to by H. Robertson on behalf of P. Miller. There was no discussion of the motion and it was not carried.

3. The motion that clause Section 5 (a) of the Constitution:

“Ordinary members, who shall be entitled on payment of the full annual subscription to one vote at general meetings or on postal ballots, and to copies of all publications of the society which are available as part of the annual subscription”

be substituted by: “Ordinary members: Class (i): members who shall be entitled on payment of the full annual subscription to one vote at general meetings or on postal ballots, and to copies of all publications of the society which are available as part of the annual subscription; Class (ii) members who pay a lesser annual subscription and shall be entitled to one vote at general meetings or on postal ballots and receive copies of *OSNZ News* only.” was tabled (H. Robertson/M. Day) and spoken to by H. Robertson on behalf of P. Miller.

Following comments from T. Crocker, D. Onley and G. Lovei, and there being no further discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and not carried.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS.

- **Chatham Island supplement to *Notornis*** - the meeting approved by acclamation the recommendation to ‘congratulate Richard Holdaway for the work involved in publishing the Chatham Island supplement. The publication is an excellent record of Chatham Island ornithological work to date and a fitting tribute to Sir Charles Fleming’ (M. Nee/R. Empson).

- **AGM venues** - H. Robertson on behalf of P. Miller expressed some concern that the last two AGMs had been held in the South Island and suggested a North Island/ South Island rotation. C. Robertson indicated that the current rotation is Northern regions/Central regions/Southern regions/Central regions with the proposed schedule for the next five years being: Manawatu, Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Hawkes Bay.

- **Book reviews** - K. Westerskov suggested the Society appoint a reviews editor to ensure that all publications about NZ birds and general books are reviewed for *Notornis*, and to produce each year a list of articles published in other journals on ornithological matters. K. Woodley introduced himself as the current Reviews Editor and explained that there were some difficulties in getting reviewers (any members interested in reviewing books on particular topics should contact Keith) and expressed interest in following up the suggestion regarding the list of journal articles. G. Lovei as former Reviews Editor added that the Society does not have funds to purchase books for review so publishers need to be solicited for books and these are not always forthcoming.

- **Mohua (Yellowhead) survey** - L. Foord described a proposal for a survey in September and recommended that interested members contact her.

- **Elections** - B. Woolley suggested that allowing retiring presidents to be on Council ex officio rather than by election would allow another member to be elected to Council without losing the experience of the ex-president. She added that an election should allow for votes for up to the required number of Council members (4 in 1995), rather than require votes for the total number required. C. Robertson noted these

comments in view of the review but suggested that it has always been an option to vote for fewer Council members than needed. He added that new Council members elected at the AGM were ‘not on board’ until the next Council meeting and suggested that since the election is based on a postal vote, then possibly the count should be taken before the AGM to allow new Council members to attend the May Council meeting and this would be considered in the review.

- **Regional Representative meeting** - D. Agnew commented that it was inappropriate for the recent RRs meeting to finish at midnight. C. Robertson noted that this had been of concern to RRs and to Council and would be discouraged in future.

- ***Notornis* format** - H. Robertson suggested on behalf of P. Miller that the *Notornis* format be revamped and renamed *Takahe*. C. Robertson commented that the format is to be reassessed at the next Council meeting. T. Lovegrove suggested that ‘*Notornis*’ means ‘bird of the south’ and this therefore would still be an appropriate name for the journal.

- **AGM organisation** - T. Lovegrove proposed a vote of thanks to L. Esler on the venue and organisation of the conference and members supported this by acclamation.

- **President** - C. Robertson proposed a vote of thanks to the immediate past president B. Bell for his long service, and to D. Crockett for the effective job that he had done despite his illness during Brian’s absences, and members supported this by acclamation.

- **Retiring Council members** - members thanked by acclamation the three retiring Council members (T. Dennison, T. Lovegrove and P. Sagar) for their contributions to the Society.

C. Robertson concluded the meeting with a challenge: to make this year entertaining and challenging and to let Council know how they want the Society to operate by making submissions to the review committee.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 6.20 pm.

D.E.C. CROCKETT  
Chairperson

C.J.R. ROBERTSON  
Chairperson

R.A. EMPSON  
Secretary

## Unusual Kingfisher Predation

On 20 July 1992, a small flock of Silvereyes were feeding on the lower branches of a feijoa tree, on a sheltered, north-facing property at Pukenui, Far North. On a branch about ten metres away sat a New Zealand Kingfisher with its head slightly cocked. Suddenly the kingfisher dived down to the feijoa tree and returned to the branch with a fluttering, screeching silvereye. The remainder of the silvereye flock fled.

The kingfisher was holding the silvereye by the upper wing. It then proceeded to hit the passerine against the branch on which it sat. This it did three or four times, then flew up into a large gum tree which made further observation impossible. The silvereye was fluttering and calling while in flight.

It was an overcast day, about 2.30 pm with no wind. This behaviour has not been seen since, although both the kingfisher and silvereyes are present in the area.

LOIS WAGENER

## OSNZ Library Periodicals

The OSNZ Library has a remarkable set of ornithological journals within its collection - see list below. These invaluable reference sources are available to members on loan, either for specific issues or on a regular basis. This is especially valuable for members who do not have access to major museum or university libraries. The Society currently charges \$2.00 per annum for each journal sent to a person regularly. The charge is a contribution towards the costs of postage.

The majority of these journals are received in exchange for reciprocal copies of *Notornis*. As many of the journals normally cost up to four times the annual membership fee this is a major benefit accruing to members. Some of the earlier issues have been as a result of donations. Discussions have been held between the Society and the Auckland Institute and Museum concerning the long-term holding and security of the Society's Library, which also includes our holdings of books. Council will be considering any charges as part of its review of Society activities.

Meanwhile we are indebted to Kathy Barrow as OSNZ Librarian for her sterling efforts in maintaining your access to this collection. With a number of helpers she has recently been creating a computer catalogue of our holdings to assist both the Museum and the Society in their decisions and operations for the future.

CHRIS ROBERTSON

**Periodicals held, as at 31/1/95**  
Acta Ornithologica (Poland) 1936-  
Acta Zoologica (Poland) 1972-

Alauda (France) 1954-  
American Museum Novitates (USA) 1974-  
Amokura (NZ) 1977-  
Aquila (Hungary) 1943-  
Ardea (Netherlands) 1962-  
Ardeola (Spain) 1954-  
Auk (USA) 1930-1995  
Auspicium (Germany) 1959-1984 (ceased publication)  
Australian Bird Bander (now Corella) 1963-1976  
Australian Bird Watcher 1969-1990  
Australian Birds and NSW Field Ornithologists' Club newsletter 1974-  
Australian Seabird Group newsletter 1976-1986  
Aves (Belgium) 1949-  
Bird Banding (now Journal of Field Ornithology) 1930-1979  
Bird Conservation International (UK) 1991-  
Bird Observer (Victoria) 1967-  
Bird Study (UK) 1954  
Birding in South Africa (ex Bokmakierie) 1989-  
Birds (RSPB Britain) 1965-  
Bokmakierie (now Birding in South Africa) 1989-  
British Birds 1949-  
British Naturalist 1955-  
BTO News (UK) 1953-  
Californian Birds (now Western Birds) 1970-1972  
Condor (USA) 1942-  
Corella (ex Australian Bird Bander) 1977-  
Cormorant (now Marine Ornithology) 1977-1989  
Countryside (UK) 1949-  
Dutch Birding 1991-  
Elepaio (Hawaii) 1939-  
El Hornero (Argentina) 1990-  
Emu (Australia) 1904-  
Explorer (USA) 1954-  
Fair Isle Bird Observatory Annual Report (UK) 1972-  
Finnish Game Research 1963-  
Ibis (UK) 1891-  
IUCN Bulletin (Switzerland) 1971-  
Japanese Journal of Ornithology (ex Tori) 1986-  
Journal of Field Ornithology (USA, ex Bird Banding) 1980-  
Journal fur Ornithologie (Germany) 1951-  
Kiwi House Review (ex Otorohanga Zoological newsletter) 1989-  
La Garcilla (Spain) 1984-  
Larus (Croatia) 1948-  
Le Gerfaut (Belgium) 1962-  
Living Bird (USA) 1962-  
L'Oiseau et Revue française ornithologique (France) 1952-  
Marine Ornithology (ex Cormorant, South Africa) 1990-  
Muruk and Papua New Guinea newsletter 1970-  
Naika (Vanuatu) 1981-  
NZ Department of Internal Affairs numbered publications 1952-1984  
NSW Field Ornithologists' Club newsletter 1967-  
Notornis 1943-

Notaki Ornitologiczna (Poland) 1961-1986  
Ornis Fennica (Finland) 1957-  
Ornis Svecica (Sweden) 1952-  
Ornithologischer Anzeiger (Germany) 1951-  
Ornithologischer Beobachter (Switzerland) 1952-  
Ornithologischer Mitteilungen (Germany) 1952-  
OSNZ News 1977-  
Ostrich (south Africa) 1942-  
Otago Acclimatisation Society 1970-  
Otorohanga Zoological Society newsletter (now Kiwi House Review) 1973-1988  
RAOU newsletter (now Wingspan, Australia) 1969-1990  
Ring (Poland) 1954-  
Ringing and Migration (UK) 1974-  
Sarawak Museum Journal 1949-  
Scottish Bird News 1958-  
Scottish Birds 1958-  
Seabird (UK) 1989-  
South Australian Ornithologist 1942-  
Stilt (Australia) 1981-  
Sunbird (Australia) 1974-  
Suomen Riista (Finland) 1975-  
Tara (NZ) 1976-  
Tasmanian Bird Report 1981-  
Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club 1946-1995  
Tasmanian Shorebird Study Group - An Occasional Stint 1982-1986  
Tori (now Japanese Journal of Ornithology) 1947-1986  
Var Fagelvard (Sweden) 1956-  
Die Vogelwarte (Germany) 1941-  
Die Vogelwelt (Germany) 1953-  
Wader Study Group Bulletin (UK) 1970-1987  
Western Birds (ex Californian Birds, USA) 1973-  
Wildfowl Trust (UK) 1974-  
Wilson Bulletin (USA) 1944-  
Wingspan (ex RAOU newsletter, Australia) 1991-  
World Birdwatch ICBP Newsletter (UK) 1992-  
Yamashina Institute (Journal of, Japan) 1958-1988

## Calendar of Events

The following constitutes the calendar of events from June 1995 to June 1996, including annual events and deadlines for members' information.

1995 - June

mid June - national wader/spoonbill census  
30 June - awards - deadline for nominations to Secretary

July

31 July - deadline for CSN submissions to Regional Recorders

August

10 August - deadline for OSNZ News items  
10 August - deadline for submissions to OSNZ review

31 August - deadline for CSN submissions to CSN Island Coordinators

September

15 September - Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to Field Investigations Officer

29 September - Council meeting

November

10 November - deadline for OSNZ News items

1996 - January

31 January - annual reports (RRs, President, scheme convenors) to Secretary

February

10 February - deadline for OSNZ News items

28 February - deadline for submissions of Notices of Motion and Council nominations to Secretary

April

15 April - Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to Field Investigations Officer

May

10 May - deadline for OSNZ News items

June

1-3 June - OSNZ AGM weekend, Foxton Beach

30 June - awards - deadline for nominations to Secretary

## Space Shuttle Grounded

The space shuttle launch site at Cape Canaveral sits in the midst of a wildlife refuge inhabited by some 400 protected or endangered bird species. On Memorial Day weekend this year dozens of perforations up to 10 cm in diameter were discovered in the orange foam insulation on the 15 storey external propellant tank of the shuttle Discovery. Concluding that the damage could not be repaired in time for the 8 June lift-off, NASA launch managers ordered the space craft rolled back into its hangar. They estimated the damage and consequent delay to have cost the agency more than US\$2 billion.

The sabotage was apparently caused by just two woodpeckers, of a common, widespread species called Northern Flickers (also known as Yellow-shafted Flickers). A preliminary report concluded that the pair may have lost a nest cavity to Starlings, and their desperate search for an alternative may have explained the unusual behaviour.

Deterrent suggestions have included spraying the tank with water in which cabbage has been boiled or with racoon scent, covering the shuttle with chicken wire or plain old shotguns. Actual deterrents include eyes imprinted on the side of yellow balloons, plastic owls, air horns and water hoses, and recommendations to make the site less attractive, such as mowing the grass less often to make the ant population - a flicker's dietary staple - less accessible.

KATHY SAWYER

Washington Post Staff Writer

## Marlborough Sounds Nature Tour

French Pass Sea Safaris have been assisting Rob Schuckard and DoC with studies and counts of the rare King Shag in the outer Marlborough Sounds over the past year, and plan to offer tours to interested members as part of this.

Three trips to each of the colonies (at White Rocks, Sentinel Rock, Duffers Reef and the Trio Islands) will be undertaken - on 29 and 30 August, 4 and 5 September to estimate numbers of chicks, 11 and 18 November and 12 and 19 December to gain more information on migration between colonies, and 1, 2, 8 and 9 July 1996 to count birds at the start of the breeding season.

Past trips have left French Pass in darkness to arrive at the colonies before sunrise, so as to get close enough to the colonies to count but not scare the birds. After the count, in the quiet of the morning, we would watch for other birds - shearwaters, Common Diving Petrels, prions, Cape Pigeons, terns, penguins, gannets and hosts of other seabirds.

Each tour includes one night's accommodation at French Pass, full briefing and slide show of species likely to be encountered, breakfast, morning tea and a guided tour to one of the colonies led by Rob Schuckard. Tours are limited to six people and cost \$122.00 per person, returning at midday. All information will be processed and passed on to the Department of Conservation.

## Summary of Records received by the Moulting Recording Scheme to 1 April 1995

Species	In moult	Not in moult	Alive	Dead	Total
Black-browed mollymawk	2	35	0	37	37
White-capped mollymawk	5	25	0	30	30
Flesh-footed shearwater	0	2	0	2	2
Short-tailed shearwater	0	1	0	1	1
Common diving petrel	1	1	1	1	2
Black petrel	0	2	0	2	2
Kerguelen petrel	0	2	0	2	2
Cape pigeon	0	2	0	2	2
Broad-billed prion	1	1	2	0	2
Blue petrel	0	3	0	3	3
Cook's petrel	0	2	0	2	2
Grey-faced petrel	0	1	0	1	1
Chatham Island taiko	0	3	3	0	3
White-headed petrel	1	0	0	1	1
Grey-backed storm petrel	0	10	10	0	10
White-faced Storm petrel	2	3	5	0	5
Blue penguin	0	2	0	2	2
Pied shag	0	1	0	1	1
Australasian bittern	0	1	0	1	1
Grey duck	1	0	1	0	1
Brown teal	1	0	0	1	1
Australasian harrier	32	10	1	41	42
NZ falcon	8	8	0	16	16
Ring-necked pheasant	1	1	1	1	2
Banded rail	0	1	0	1	1
Weka	0	1	1	0	1
Pukeko	0	1	0	1	1
Pied oystercatcher	1	0	0	1	1
Pied stilt	7	27	0	34	34
Black stilt	5	4	0	9	9
Oriental pratincole	0	2	0	2	2
NZ dotterel	3	13	0	16	16
Banded dotterel	23	42	0	65	65
Shore plover	8	23	0	31	31
Wrybill	5	33	0	38	38
Pacific golden plover	20	47	0	67	67
Spur-winged plover	1	14	0	15	15
Turmstone	11	18	0	29	29
Lesser knot	4	49	0	53	53
Sanderling	2	0	0	2	2
Curlew sandpiper	2	4	0	6	6
Sharp-tailed sandpiper	5	5	0	10	10
Pectoral sandpiper	4	12	0	16	16
Red-necked stint	2	12	0	14	14
Eastern curlew	2	1	0	3	3
Whimbrel	1	3	0	4	4

Species	In moult	Not in moult	Alive	Dead	Total
Little whimbrel	3	2	0	5	5
Bristle-thighed curlew	0	3	0	3	3
Bar-tailed godwit	8	72	0	80	80
Black-tailed godwit	0	1	0	1	1
Hudsonian godwit	0	3	0	3	3
Wandering tattler	2	8	0	10	10
Grey phalarope	0	1	0	1	1
Arctic skua	2	0	0	2	2
Southern black-backed gull	7	3	2	8	10
Red-billed gull	4	1	0	5	5
Black-billed gull	2	1	0	3	3
White-winged black tern	2	0	0	2	2
Black-fronted tern	3	1	0	4	4
Caspian tern	2	0	0	2	2
White-fronted tern	2	0	0	2	2
Sooty tern	1	0	0	1	1
Fairy tern	1	0	0	1	1
Little tern	1	0	0	1	1
White-capped noddy	1	0	0	1	1
White tern	2	0	0	2	2
NZ pigeon	4	1	0	5	5
Spotted dove	1	0	0	1	1
Kaka	0	12	0	12	12
Eastern rosella	0	1	0	1	1
Yellow-crowned parakeet	0	1	0	1	1
Oriental cuckoo	1	1	0	2	2
Pallid cuckoo	0	1	0	1	1
Shining cuckoo	0	8	0	8	8
Long-tailed cuckoo	0	5	0	5	5
Morepork	1	5	1	5	6
NZ kingfisher	7	6	6	7	13
Welcome swallow	0	1	0	1	1
NZ pipit	0	1	0	1	1
Hedge sparrow (Dunnoek)	17	6	22	1	23
Blackbird	16	16	28	4	32
Song thrush	10	11	14	7	21
Fernbird	1	0	0	1	1
Whitehead	2	0	2	0	2
Brown creeper	1	0	1	0	1
Grey warbler	23	3	25	1	26
Fantail	11	7	17	1	18
Snares Is. tomtit	4	2	6	0	6
NZ tomtit	10	1	11	0	11
NZ robin	1	0	1	0	1
Silvereye	136	71	199	8	207
Bellbird	10	6	15	1	16
Tui	0	4	0	4	4
Yellowhammer	1	1	1	1	2
Curlew	3	2	5	0	5
Chaffinch	23	5	27	1	28
Greenfinch	20	6	26	0	26
Goldfinch	5	9	10	4	14
Redpoll	15	41	56	0	56
House sparrow	297	79	374	2	376
Starling	3	1	3	1	4
Common myna	6	0	0	6	6
Australian magpie	0	2	0	2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>1673</b>

Contact French Pass Motel and Sea Safaris, French Pass, RD3 Rai Valley, Marlborough Sounds. Phone/fax (03) 576 5204. Due to limited spaces available on each tour we suggest phoning first. Please note that weather extremes may alter dates.

DANNY & LYN BOULTON

### Moult Recording Scheme

Further to the item in *OSNZ News* No. 75 (June 1995), the following is a summary of the records received up to 1 April 1995.

The new Moult Card and Non-Moult Record Form are reproduced on page 16.

While the new card and form are simpler to use than their predecessors, we still need to encourage the fullest documentation of moult, so that all the relevant data can be run through the computer analysis programmes. We therefore ask contributors to complete all sections of the *Moult Card* (for moulting birds) and *Non-Moult Record Form* (for non-moulting birds). Information for birds in active moult should be entered only on the *Moult Card* and not on the summary form, as previously. For non-moulting birds, please use either the *Moult Card* or *Non-Moult Record Form*. Note the non-moulting birds include both those in old plumage (worn and faded) and those in new

plumage (fresh, without wear). The state of the plumage (old or new) has to be stated on the record form.

These new designs arrange the records in a way more appropriate for inputting data onto the Victoria University of Wellington computer.

BEN BELL/KIM McCONKEY

### Saddleback Release

In March 1994, the Department of Conservation released 25 South Island Saddlebacks on Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds. The birds were sourced from Jacky Lee and North Island, with the transfer including adult males and females, and unsexed juveniles. Of these birds, eighteen have since been located and positively identified (by leg band combination) on Motuara. This represents a 69% success rate.

The birds have just passed through their first breeding season since transfer, with two chicks successfully reared and a further nest located.

Such results are very encouraging, and it is to be hoped that the transfer is a success in the long term.

JOHANNA PIERRE

### Cormorant Journal

Readers may like to know of the advent of *IWRB Cormorant Research Group Bulletin* - after all we are in the cormorant capital of the world, although a somewhat neglected group here. There is another journal, *Le Cormoran*, but this is no more restricted to cormorants than *Notornis* is to Takahes, whereas this new one is quite specific.

The present issue, as a result of the Third European Conference on Cormorants, held in Gdansk, Poland in April 1993, contains a number of original papers, mainly dedicated to Great Cormorants (Black Shags) in various European countries, but with contributions from Israel, Saudi Arabia and India.

Contact Maarten Platteeuw and Mennobart R. van Eerden, Rijkswaterstraat directorate Flevoland, P.O. Box 600, 8200 Lelystad, The Netherlands. Costs are not currently available.

JOHN WARHAM

### Wader Seminar - Brisbane, March 1996

The world's attention will be on Brisbane in March next year when the Ramsar Conference will be held there. It is appropriate at this time, when a lot of

attention will be focused on the East Asian Flyway, that the Australasian Wader Study Group hold a seminar/workshop on the threats to waders of the flyway.

The date set for the seminar is the weekend of 16/17 March 1996, immediately before the Ramsar Conference. The timing of the seminar will give Ramsar delegates and Australian authorities the opportunity to gain an insight into some of the problems faced in protecting migratory waders along this flyway.

Objectives of the seminar/workshop are to:

1. focus attention on the serious threats to migratory waders in the East Asian/Australasian flyway.
2. describe impacts of these threats - actual and potential.
3. develop solutions, drawing on world-wide experience.
4. provide recommendations for action to the Ramsar Conference.

Four half day sessions covering the four elements of the theme will be held over two days. Three of these sessions will be formal papers, the fourth a plenary session, each set followed by workshops.

Invited papers on the first day will cover threats and impacts, including habitat degradation and loss, hunting, disturbance, effects of habitat loss in non-breeding areas and population monitoring. The second day will cover solutions, including an overview of those adopted elsewhere, and the Shorebird Action Plan for East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Registration (fees to be determined) for the seminar will include a dinner on the Saturday evening, morning and afternoon teas and proceedings of the seminar/workshop. Expressions of interest are sought from anyone interested in the aims and objectives of the seminar. If you would like further information contact Phil Straw, 15 Kings Road, Brighton-le-Sands, NSW 2216, or fax 61 (2) 597 7765.

PHIL STRAW

## Mystery Bird # 20

Mystery Bird # 20 appears to be a slightly out of focus seabird of some kind, and a rather messy one at that. This is partly because it is moulting its wing feathers, including its middle primaries (leaving the old outer primaries contrasting with fresh inner primaries) and its greater secondary coverts (causing the pale bases of the secondaries to show on the left wing and a translucent patch on the right wing). So, what group of birds does this belong to? The most obvious contender is the petrels, or *Procellariiformes*. These are characterised by having tubular nostrils sitting on top of their bill, but this is hard to tell on this photo. However, we can rule out the

petrels by the fact that the central tail feathers extend beyond the rest. This is not found on the petrels, and furthermore, this tells us that the bird we have is a skua of the genus *Stercorarius* (in some countries known as jaegers). The larger *Catharacta* skuas do not have this tail elongation.

Now we must attempt to age the bird on its plumage. Juvenile skuas start life with heavily barred upper- and underwings, and this is progressively reduced over the next four years or so. This bird shows all dark upper and underwings and so is an older bird. It does show white upper- and undertail coverts with distinct black bars. Birding folklore used to suggest that a pale rump indicated a juvenile bird but this has been found to be not purely so: adults in non-breeding plumage also show this. The pale belly, barred sides and flanks and heavily marked breast show that this is a pale morph bird (both pale and dark morph adults are recognised: an intermediate morph is treated by some authorities as a form of the pale morph). What we are looking at then is an adult light morph skua in non-breeding plumage. But which one is it?

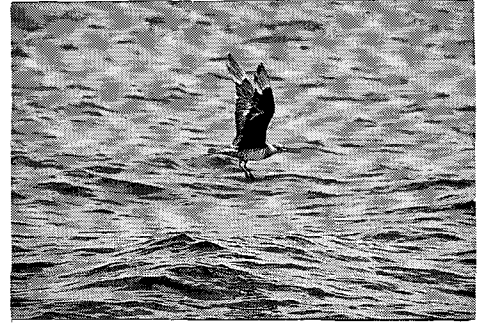
One useful character to distinguish between the skuas can be the number of completely pale outer primary shafts (5-6 in Pomarine, 4 in Arctic, 2-3 in Long-tailed). As our bird is moulting these, all we can do is eliminate Long-tailed. One structural difference between the other two species is the length of the bill compared to the length of the maxillary unguis (the hook on the tip of the bill), this ratio being greater on Arctic than Pomarine. Unfortunately the quality of the photo doesn't allow us to determine this. There are some other pointers, though.

The central tail feather extensions are quite long, yet show no signs of the twisting typical of Pomarine. Also, there is just visible (editor's note: at least in the original!) some pale feathering at the base of the bill. Both of the features show this bird is an Arctic Skua. We seldom get to see skuas well enough to photograph them, though, and much of our decisions on skua identification come on 'jizz', the general impression the living bird gives. Pomarine is a heavy, deep-chested bird, while the Arctic is a less bulky, smaller bird. The latter's head can look smaller, and the 'hand' of the wing can appear fuller (though in our bird the fact that it is missing its middle primaries causes this impression to disappear). Our bird is not a particularly heavy bird, or large when compared to the wing length, but its head doesn't exactly appear small. This may just be because of the dark colour, and if there are any doubters about the identification I can show them photos clearly showing the pointed tail feathers!

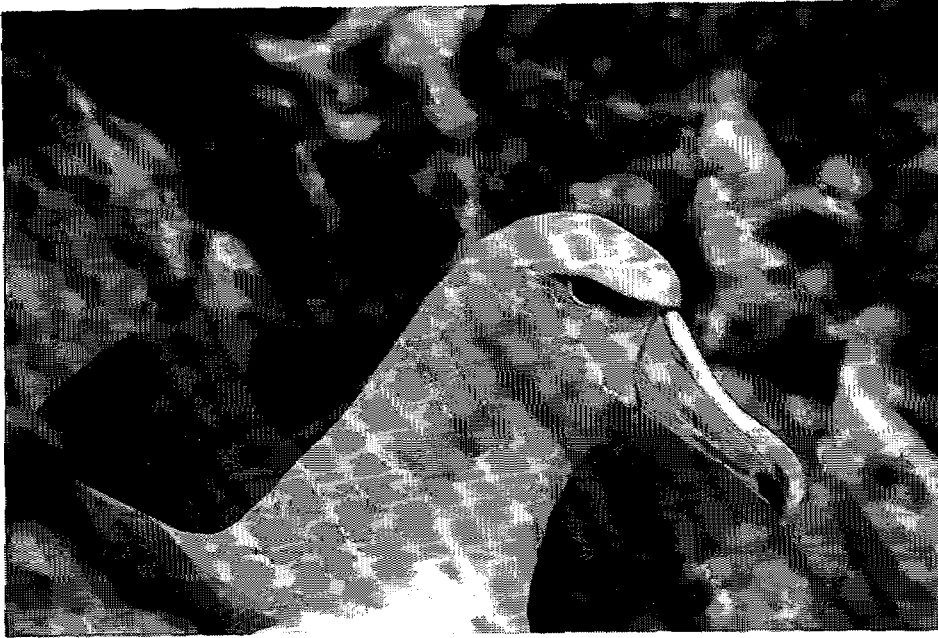
Arctic Skuas, as their name suggests, breed in the northern hemisphere, migrating south after breeding. They are

much commoner than Pomarine Skuas around New Zealand, and may in some years number among our commoner Arctic migrants (after godwits, knots, turnstones and golden plovers the next commonest contender numbers only a few hundred). This bird was photographed off Waiheke Island in the Hauraki Gulf in late December 1994. The small skuas generic name, *Stercorarius*, apparently means 'belonging to dung', referring to their habit of stealing food from other birds - this was once thought to be excrement.

PHIL BATTLETT







### Mystery Bird # 21

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

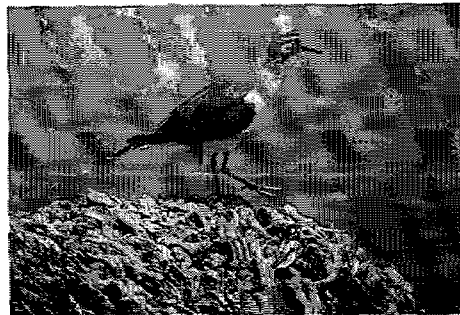
### Mystery Birds

I am having to write this a little earlier than usual so there may be a few last minute entries still to come. At this stage however the leader is Pam Agnew with six out of six. Colin Hill and George & Beth Wallace have five. Several people have four of the birds correctly identified.

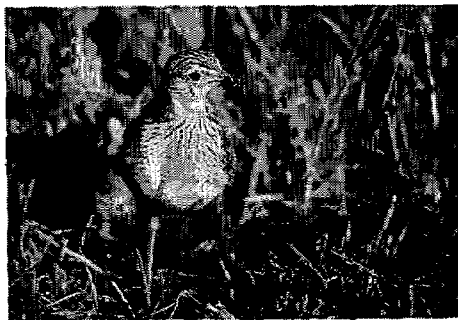
The birds in the June *OSNZ News* were:

- D. female Greenfinch
  - E. New Zealand King Shag
  - F. Australasian Gannet
- Good luck with G, H and I.

DON HADDEN  
P.O. Box 6054  
Christchurch 8030



G



H



### RAOU Column

The RAOU is setting up a Birds on Farms (BOF) project to assess the impact of revegetation programmes on bird diversity, so that revegetation can be carried out in such a way as to maximise bird diversity. The project is in conjunction with the National Decade of Landcare: half way through this ten year plan, knowledge on the causes of land degradation has greatly improved, though the degradation process continues. The BOF project will also help to identify species which are particularly susceptible to current land management practices, and indicate how these species may be conserved. Volunteers are being urged to "adopt a farm" for annual surveys, initially in northeast Victoria, and "get boffing!"

At the recent RAOU Scientific Day in Melbourne, around 120 people heard Emma Moyses tell of the use of global positioning system (GPS) units in her studies of Helmeted Honeyeaters in their last stronghold in the Yellingbo Nature Reserve in Victoria. Meanwhile satellite telemetry has been used by Durno Murray of the Albatross Study Group. Individual Wandering Albatrosses have been tracked moving westwards from Bellambi round the southern coast of Australia to the Indian Ocean. Birds covered 7-800 km each day when travelling to their foraging areas, but would often stay for several days within such areas before moving on.

Mike Clarke demonstrated that the colonial Noisy Miner in south-eastern Australia has a detrimental effect in fragmented or degraded dry woodland, by driving away or killing other species. When miners were removed from experimental sites, other birds moved in. Melissa Giesse spoke about her studies aiming to produce quantitative data on the effect of human visitors and skuas on Adelie Penguins in Antarctica. She fitted penguins with devices to monitor heart rate and stomach temperature, and integrated these with behavioural observations. The presence of humans and skuas caused heart and metabolic rates to increase, but birds took longer to recover from human disturbance. This increased stress was not always obvious from observed behaviour.

DNA studies are transforming the study of relatedness. Unlike mammals, birds have DNA in their red blood cells, and a couple of drops of blood is sufficient for a sample. Recent findings from Les Christidis for example indicate that the NZ Thrush or Piopio was a bowerbird. Stephen Ambrose explained the

methodology and emerging results of the RAOU's Australian Bird Count project to show that there is still an important future for low-tech (or no-tech) methods in discovering new information about Australian birds.

RAOU members have three special interest groups to conduct and coordinate studies and projects on birds, as well as to monitor, and make recommendations on, their conservation status. Much of the work of these groups has a global significance.

The Australasian Raptor Association (ARA) promotes the study of diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey. Raptors, being at the top of their food chains, can alert us to previously unknown problems, a classic example being the cause of the decline of Peregrine Falcons being linked to organochlorine pesticides in agriculture, with serious implications about human health. The ARA publishes the quarterly *Australasian Raptor Association News*, numerous references to which can be found in *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. The ARA has just published 34 original papers in the Proceedings of its 10th anniversary conference.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) coordinates such activities as the population monitoring project, the leg-flagging project, the North West Australia Wader Expeditions, the Hooded Plover project, and produces *The Stilt* twice a year and a quarterly newsletter *The Tattler*.

The Australasian Seabird Group (ASG) investigates and maps offshore seabird colonies, coordinates beach patrolling, investigates activities of seabirds at sea and maintains a list of people within Australia known to be interested in seabirds. In December 1993 it was revitalised with a Congress on Seabirds in Hobart, and will soon produce an *Atlas of Southeast Australian Seabirds*.

Details may be obtained from:

Peter Marmion, Treasurer, Australasian Raptor Association, Flora's Cottage, Fairy Glen Road, Collinsvale, Tasmania 7012. Annual subscription A\$20.00 for Australian and New Zealand residents, including *ARA News*.

Brenda Murlis, Administrative Secretary, Australasian Wader Studies Group, 34 Centre Road, Vermont, Victoria 3133. Subscription A\$15.00 for Australasian residents, including *The Stilt* and *The Tattler*.

ASG Secretary/Treasurer, Australasian Seabird Group, RAOU Head Office, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123. Subscription A\$15.00 for individuals, A\$20.00 for families and institutions, including the twice-yearly newsletter.

from *RAOU CONSERVATION NOTES* No. 16, August 1995.

## Breeding Banded Stilts

Cyclone Bobby dumped 385 mm of rain in the saltmarshes area of the Goldfields region of southern central Western Australia in four days of continuous rain on 25-28 February 1995. On 12 March a 4.5 hour aerial survey from Kalgoorlie revealed Lakes Marmion, Barlee and Ballard to be full, with hundreds of small islands. Marmion had no Banded Stilts, Barlee 20,000, all seemingly paired, while Ballard had 10,000, half of these at a colony that appeared to have around 2,000 nests - 16 days after the rain started and 12 days after it stopped. Subsequent information indicated that the first eggs must have been laid around 8 March. During this time the birds had to recognise that the rain event had occurred, migrate possibly 1,000 km from coastal areas of WA, pair, mate, select a site and produce eggs.

By 15 March, during a nine hour visit by helicopter, the colony had grown to 4,500 nests. It was a frenzy of activity. Pairing, fighting, copulating - 20 visible at any moment - like a cross between the main street of Tokyo and the red light district of Kalgoorlie. Many birds were not in full breeding plumage - 10% had no breeding plumage at all, but were taking part in all activities, even incubating.

About ten days later Jim Lane and the ABC Wildlife Film Unit spent ten days at the colony, which had grown to 20,000 nests at a rate of ten per square metre, with a second colony of 15,000 nests forming about 3 km away, and two smaller colonies. Hatching commenced on 3 April.

The white eggs (with a few black streaks and spots) produce fluffy white chicks - both unique for waders. When dry, one parent takes them down to the water and away they swim. By mid April around 2,000 chicks left the colony each morning.

In late May the Film Unit made a return visit to film chick creching and fledging, reporting tens of thousands of well-grown chicks at the western end of Lake Ballard. Although the chicks could swim and feed in the normal metre deep water during their first few days after hatching, they preferred to make their way to the shallow parts of the lake, 30 km away, for the bulk of their fledging period. There they marched around on the wet mud or shallow water, picking up minute items of food, thought to be too small to be the traditional brine shrimp.

In contrast the accompanying adults, which had greatly reduced in numbers as chicks coalesced into hundred strong groups, seemed to find the feeding unsatisfactory, and periodically left the chicks to fly out to deeper water, presumably to feed on the now abundant supply of brine shrimps.

Nearly a thousand chicks have been banded and colour-flagged. A further aerial

survey is planned for mid July to see if any 'second round' of breeding has been made, as occurred at Lake Torrens in 1989.

CLIVE MINTON, JIM LANE,  
GRANT PEARSON

*The Tattler*, Nos 3 & 4, April/July 1995

## A Strange Tale...

J. Drummond was a well-known natural history columnist around the turn of the century. His extensive collection of newspaper clippings and correspondence is held in the Archives Department of the Canterbury Museum. Recently, while looking through this material, I found the following report published in Drummond's weekly *Lyttelton Times* column sometime during 1911.

"Mr W. Best of Otaki has made inquiries in regard to a native bird of ancient times called 'moeka'. He has been told a short time ago by an old survey hand, who has travelled with survey parties through both islands, that about seven years ago a strange bird was shot. It was described to an old Maori woman, who said that it was a 'moeka', an ancient bird that was believed to have been extinct for many years, and that the killing of it would bring bad luck. As described to Mr. Best, the bird was slightly larger than a saddleback, with black plumage, dotted with red spots, blue wings, short legs, and a bill and feet like a Parrots. Mr. Best states that the man possesses the skin"

The mind boggles!!

ANDREW CROSSLAND

## Fashionable feathered headgear

While on a cliff-top looking for nesting White-fronted Terns on Mataora and Motuotamatea, two of the Sugarloaf Islands offshore from New Plymouth, my attention was drawn to some Starlings perching on the wooden barrier rail.

Nearby there were flax plants in flower and I wasn't surprised to see that the Starlings, having sampled the delights of the flax nectar, were sporting orange caps of pollen. It is not unusual to see Starlings thus adorned.

Next on parade were several mynas that had also learnt the art of feeding on the flax nectar and had orange head feathers. This was new to me.

Then to my astonishment, a few sparrows arrived on the "cat-walk" and they were also in the height of fashion with orange heads. They were looking very stylish and almost like a new species of bird. I had taken a 94 year old on this bird observation trip and she was captivated by what we saw and said it opened up a whole new world for her. It appears that one is never too old to start sampling the joys of birdwatching.

AUDREY EAGLE

## Birdwatching in Texas

These notes come from a trip that started in Denver, Colorado on 23 February 1995 and finished back in Denver 15 days later. Some days were simply spent driving and the total distance covered was nearly 4,000 miles. The serious birdwatching began in Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge just south of Socorro, New Mexico and ended at Con Can on the Edwards Plateau west of San Antonio, Texas.

In between we drove down the Rio Grande valley from the Big Bend National Park to Brownsville and from there up to the coast to Corpus Christi and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, before returning to Denver.

I found the best all-round field guide was the National Geographic Society *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. As Texas straddles the boundary between east and west, often the bird I was trying to identify was not in the National Audubon Society *Field Guide to the Western Region*. There are specialist guides to the birds of Texas but I was not convinced that any of these was a better option.

Few people would visit Texas for the scenery, which tends to be very flat and arid. It is depressing how little unmodified habitat remains where there is sufficient rainfall to support arable farming.

There are two excellent, indeed essential, books published by the American Birding Association that tell you where to find the birds. One is the *Birder's Guide to*

*the Rio Grande Valley of Texas* and the other is *Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast*. The books have detailed and accurate directions for finding even the more obscure places that they recommend.

By going at the end of February we were able to see both Whooping and Sandhill Cranes, as well as thousands of Snow Geese which spend the winter at Bosque del Apache. In a second visit to Con Can six weeks later my Denver relatives were able to see waders in passage to the Arctic, including Pectoral and Upland Sandpipers as well as flycatchers and warblers that were still well to the south of the Mexican border in early March. Summers in Texas are oppressively hot, but that is when you will find the hummingbirds.

Bensen-Rio Grande State Park is some fifty miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico, and has about 230 hectares of river-bottom woodland - some of the little remaining habitat in the area. The large caravan park is crowded with RVs (large camper vans) of elderly escapees of winter further north. The campers put out large amounts of fresh citrus fruit and bird seed mixtures every morning, then sit back to watch the show. The abundance of uncommon birds that come to the feast is quite phenomenal.

Large, ungainly looking Plain Chachalacas, Green Jays and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers compete with Long-billed Thrashers, Great-tailed Grackles and cowbirds for the food. Altamira Orioles, less abundant, can also be seen, and in the surrounding woodland there were White-winged Doves and Blue-grey Gnatcatchers.

Corpus Christi is close to both the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and Padre Island National Seashore, as well as having excellent wader habitats within the city boundaries. At one of the latter I was rewarded with excellent views of the Roseate Spoonbills that live on the bay. Padre Island was notable for a Sandwich Tern with glowing pink breast plumage, and many Sanderlings feeding happily, oblivious to the children playing on the beach around them. Corpus Christi was a great place for terns - in addition to the ubiquitous Caspian, we also saw Forster's, Gull-billed and Royal Terns, and Black Skimmers, the latter a strikingly handsome bird. The boat trip to Aransas NWR from Rockfort is a must if you want good views of the very rare Whooping Cranes. Other highlights were American Avocets and Tricoloured Herons.

I know Denver isn't in Texas, but I spent several days there and was impressed by how much bird life, particularly the many species of duck, is found in this area.

The most memorable event was the remarkable display of a male Northern Flicker. Large, handsome members of the woodpecker family, the males have a vivid red moustachial streak. Many of these birds were in the trees of Denver suburbs

involved in excited courtship rituals.

I first heard the bird in question when I was easily 500 metres away. I thought there was a road gang using a pneumatic drill. Then I saw the bird perched on a metal chimney cowl, alternately calling loudly to attract a mate and then rapping his bill on the metal cowl in the way in which they usually rap on trees. The noise it made had to be heard to be believed, and the bird was obviously as pleased as punch with his performance.

In all we saw 169 different birds well enough to make positive identifications, the great majority of these new to me.

PETER BRINDLEY

## High altitude Long-tailed Cuckoo

Early in the afternoon of 6 January 1994, I found a dead Long-tailed Cuckoo on Summit Plateau (260-T20:27314-62114). Summit Plateau is 2600 m. above sea level and just below Dome Shelter on Mt Ruapehu.

The weather was calm and clear all day but the previous three days had been stormy. The bird had not been dead long as it was in perfect condition, lying on top of the snow. The bush line on Ruapehu is between 1200-1400 metres, and whether it was blown up the mountain during the storm, or had attempted to fly over earlier that day, is uncertain.

IAN WILSON  
(submitted by Stella Rowe)

## Review

*Birds of Vanuatu*, by Heinrich L. Bregulla. Anthony Nelson, 1992, 294 pp., ISBN 0 904614 34 4 (hardback). Available from Anthony Nelson, Box 9, Oswestry, Shropshire SY11 1BY, England.

This is an excellent book. The author, Heinrich Bregulla, is a German biologist who lived in Vanuatu for nearly twenty years, during which he acquired an extensive knowledge of the birdlife.

A different writer has contributed a scholarly introduction to the geography, geology, climate, flora and fauna of the islands. This is followed by an overview of the bird species to be found there, with a clear account of the impact of human expansion on the island habitats, as well as an account of progress in conservation.

It was good to learn that no bird species has been wiped out and none is considered to be in immediate danger, though, as one would expect, some are less abundant than formerly and many are confined to small isolated areas.

Of the 121 species included in the checklist, seven are endemic. There is a comprehensive table showing on which of the 28 major islands of Vanuatu the 64 breeding species of land and fresh water birds can be found.

The book is illustrated with fifteen colour plates of "field guide" illustrations. These are rather disappointing if the overall standard can be judged by the illustrations of birds also found in New Zealand. There are also excellent colour photographs of ten species, including three of the endemics, as well as many good black and white photographs.

Some 200 pages are devoted to comprehensive accounts of the birds in the checklist. This section is quite outstanding for its readability and coverage. There is an excellent overview of each order and family found in Vanuatu, followed by a detailed account of the birds found within each family. The effect is not only to inform the reader about the birds of Vanuatu, but also to put them in the context of the birdlife of Australasia and the South West Pacific.

Twitchers will have to be fit and hardy and have time at their disposal to put all seven endemics on their lists. Several are confined to hill and mountain forest where access is difficult. However, if the author's field notes can be relied upon, the average birdwatcher should be able to find the Vanuatu White-eye, Vanuatu Flycatcher and the Vanuatu Fruit Dove in the course of excursions from the comfort of tourist accommodation.

More than a field guide, I can recommend this book to anyone with an interest in birds who may be contemplating a trip to Vanuatu.

PETER BRINDLEY

## Regional Roundup

### Northland

The annual winter census was carried out on the Whangarei and Kaipara Harbours in June. Royal Spoonbills have increased in number on the Whangarei Harbour from 24 in 1994 to 41 in 1995, and from 85 in 1994 on the Rangaunu Harbour to 107 in 1995. Parengarenga holds about the same number.

Beach patrols have continued on both west and east coast beaches each month with low numbers being recovered at present. An interesting find on Kauri Mountain beach was the carapace of a leatherback turtle - at about one and a half metres long, the turtle would have been quite large when alive.

Adrian Reigen gave an interesting talk, accompanied by slides, to our July meeting about his recent trip to Japan to attend the international workshop and conference on migratory waterbirds using the Australasian flyway, and the effect the harbour reclamation project at Hakata Bay, Fukuoka, will have on these.

An enjoyable pot luck dinner held at Bruce Yorke's home enabled members to socialise and refresh their memories with birdcalls. This was followed some nights later by two hours listening to and identifying kiwi calls, enlivened by a splendid possum fight, a Morepork which called continuously 29 times, two satellites travelling across the sky and three shooting stars, one quite spectacular. The tentative results from a listening census of kiwi calls throughout Waitangi Forest indicates that numbers are down 60% on 1985 figures, but for the rest of Northland numbers are about the same as the previous two years.

On 29 July ten members from the northern region and some Far North Forest and Bird members, complete with boots and spades, were ferried across from Matauri Bay to Motukawanui Island, where about a thousand small trees and shrubs awaited their attention. Trees and flax planted by our groups in the previous two years are all flourishing, and DoC recently transferred ten North Island Brown Kiwi to the island. It was hoped also eventually to transfer the first kiwi chick hatched at the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre on 31 July, from one of two eggs rescued after the brooding bird was killed by a dog near Ohaeawai. Disappointingly it died two days later - hopefully others will survive and make transfers possible.

A group of four Kaka have been making their presence known in the Whau Valley/Kamo area of Whangarei since July. Presumably these have flown over from Little Barrier Island to explore and it will be interesting to see how long they remain in the area.

Now that the kiwifruit are ripening the passerine banding group has again begun

banding Silvereyes, under the direction of Ray Pierce, at Wren Greechan's property at Kiripaka. Some interesting data are beginning to emerge. From around 200 hundred birds there have been 15 recaptures from 1993 and 1994 respectively - quite a high recovery rate. To quote Ray - 'we still await the elusive recovery from the south!'

(Lorna Simpkin)

### Auckland

At two of our recent meetings informative talks were given on faraway places. Shaarina Boyd of DoC spoke of and showed slides on Costa Rica and Ray Thorpe gave an illustrated talk on Gough and Marion Islands. In July David Lambert, leader of the Ecology and Evolution Research Group at the School of Biological Science and Director of the University Centre for Conservation Biology spoke about the revolution in DNA technology in the last six years. The CCB Research Group has studied the mating systems of Pukekos, skuas, NZ Robins and Kakapo with the aid of DNA. The ramifications of DNA research are astonishing and the presentation impressed even those unfamiliar with the study of conservation biology.

At the August meeting Peter Jenkins gave a most stimulating talk on bird biology. The anatomy and physiology of birds were discussed, with emphasis being placed in the unusual aspects which make birds so unique. A discussion on the evolution of birdlife in New Zealand provided members with a thought-provoking topic. Alison Davis also spoke at the same meeting and showed slides of the Shore Plover and its habitat. The second release of the bird on Motuora Island is to take place later in the month - it is hoped this time that the birds will establish themselves in permanent residence.

The Annual General Meeting and mid-year Christmas Dinner for the region was held at the end of June at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust lodge. Mel Galbraith spoke of the pending introduction of Stitchbirds onto Tiritiri Matangi Island and Mike Graham spoke and showed slides of birds encountered by trampers in different habitats.

Highlights of recent beach patrols on Muriwai were the finding of a Grey-backed Storm Petrel, a rare bird in our waters, and a large prion wreck in July.

(Kay Haslett/Doug Booth)

### South Auckland

Despite the seemingly constant rain over the past few months a significant number of interesting birds have been recorded in our region of late. This is mainly due to the census work and beach patrols which still take place regardless of the weather

conditions. In fact a walk along a west coast beach in sideways driving rain can be most invigorating.

Thanks to the long periods of strong onshore winds, August's Kariotahe Beach patrol yielded a large number of recoveries. A total of 153 birds were picked up in the 21 km patrol, the vast majority being prions which numbered 134. Although five species of prion were amongst that total, most were Fairy and Thin-billed. That works out at six prions per kilometre walked. Compared to last August, when only nine prions were found, this year's 134 seems high, though not compared to the 443 of 1986.

On the subject of pelagics, several lice were collected from some of the birds, and were subsequently identified as *Naubates prioni*, a species described in 1908 and found solely on the prion species.

The winter census of the Firth of Thames took place on 4 June in uncharacteristically good weather. Some interesting totals include 4,726 Pied Stilts, a Royal Spoonbill, three Far-eastern Curlews, 15 NZ Dotterels, a Little Egret, 2 Australasian Bitterns and approximately 2,500 Wrybill. SIPO numbered 24,453, the highest census count to date.

Coincidentally the 34,306 SIPO counted during the Manukau census on 18 June also constitutes the largest census figure to date. Other noteworthy records for that day include 3,694 Red-billed Gulls (the highest total for 20 years), 11 Far-eastern Curlews, two Marsh Sandpipers, 15 Curlew Sandpipers, and one each of White Heron, Great Knot and Sanderling - the latter still present on 30 July.

The eight Black Stilts seen at Puhinui is a slight increase on the usual figure (from E node onwards), and now include a banded individual, first seen by Peter Brindley several days later.

Other miscellaneous reports from our region include 60 Spotted Shags north of Waharau, 16 Galahs seen in a field at Mangatawhiri on 15 July, two Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits at Seagrove on 30 July and a Greenshank at nearby Clarks Bay on 25 June.

Field work aside, our last three evening meetings are certainly worthy of mention. In May Murray Williams gave a talk and slide show on the Brown Teal and its two flightless, subantarctic relatives. The maps illustrating the species rapid decline on the mainland were certainly worrying - thank heavens for Great Barrier Island where Brown Teal are still fairly plentiful, easy to see and stable.

June's meeting was a run-down on the events and results of the year's AGM on Stewart Island, which was accompanied by photos taken by Pam Agnew and David Lawrie.

July saw a small number of us at a totally different venue altogether, when we

were treated to a visit to the bird collection at the Auckland Museum. Firstly Brian Gill briefed us on the history of the collection, showed how specimens are prepared and stored, then took us into the recently revamped section of the museum where the skins are housed.

Many specimens of both extant and extinct species were laid out for us to marvel over, including Black Robin, Huia, Yellowhead and South Island Piopio. It is both sad and fascinating to look over museum specimens, and satisfying to know that the Victorian practice of killing for museums no longer exists. All new specimens added to the collection die from natural causes.

Finally our bi-annual trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island on the weekend of 1-2 July was most enjoyable. Blessed with brilliant weather (on the Saturday at least), we were able to catch up with most of the residents very quickly, with superb views of Saddleback, robin, Whitehead and, of course, the Takahe.

After sunset we traipsed down to the beach to watch the Blue Penguins and Grey-faced Petrels come in, the latter flying just above our heads like giant bats in the darkness. They were responding favourably to Adrian Reigen's brilliant "war whoops".

The undoubted highlight of the weekend for me was the incredible bioluminescence of the sea that evening, when any movement in the water would leave behind it an eerie and fascinating trail of intense green light - isn't nature wonderful?

(Paul Harrison)

### Waikato

Five Waikato members attended the very memorable AGM in Stewart Island. The RR's plane landed her back in Hamilton just in time to attend the monthly evening meeting at which she gave a very full report on the weekend happenings. Attention was then diverted to other islands, when we heard from Phil Thomson about restoration of Coromandel offshore islands. Phil spoke about the work involved in restoring a habitat and maintaining a natural balance, as well as just putting birds into safe places.

At our June meeting Shaarina Boyd told us how the Auckland Conservancy develops conservation strategies to preserve natural features, flora and fauna, while providing access for an increasing number of people wishing to see and enjoy them. Shaarina illustrated her talk with excellent slides of examples such as Black Petrel and Brown Teal on Great Barrier Island, and Shore Plover on Motuora Island.

Adrian Reigen switched our focus to problems beyond our shores, but inextricably related to them, when he mapped the routes our migratory birds use

on the East Asian-Australasian flyway. Adrian's slides of human development projects and subsequent desecration of feeding areas of birds migrating along the flyway showed how urgent it is to secure the cooperation of all the countries involved in protecting some areas for the birds.

As a follow-up to hearing about island restoration, our May field trip took us to Mokoia Island, where we were delighted to see how NZ Robins and Saddlebacks have multiplied since our last visit there a couple of years ago. Delighted we were, too, to be able to see Stitchbirds with such ease. A resident Weka or two were also seen, as was a Morepork, startled from its perch just above the track. Its daylight flight for deeper cover attracted an intense scolding from the many Fantails nearby.

On July weekends we began banding passerines in backyards and at a local orchard. Caught in the nets were Silvereyes, Grey Warblers, Greenfinches and a Myna. Drop-traps are great for catching Silvereyes and the odd Blackbird, but the sparrows avoid them with a cunning that shows why they are survivors. This project was to encourage junior members, but it seems to be the oldies who are getting the most from it. Perhaps they will bring their grandchildren along!

Hugh Clifford and his gallant helpers have braved the recent heavy rain to spend time camping out on Motuotau Island, to begin burrowscoping for incubating Grey-faced Petrels. Several trips have been made to Mount Maunganui to catch and band adults, and to look for incubating birds. With predator control being carried out at present, we hope for better fledging success at the Mount this year.

A very docile and very light Black Petrel was retrieved at a Matangi property and taken to Folkert Nieuwland in June, where it was fed on fish for a couple of days, before dying suddenly in Folkert's hands. As this happened on the day of our meeting it was available for all to see, but not alive as we had planned. Shaarina had arranged for it to return to Auckland Bird Rescue with her, but it will now become an exhibit at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

Kaka are again being reported from various places in the Waikato - one at Kawhia for most of the autumn, one at Waingarō, another at Newstead and two for several weeks in Matamata.

Frank Bailey reported a Silvereye's nest containing two young in June!

Last month I had a call from a very irate young lady who was being attacked by a pair of Spur-winged Plovers every time she entered her horse paddock. She says one bird actually struck her twelve times as she walked to where her horse was fed. She wanted to know what I could do to help her. I told her to 'Phone DoC!'

(Bev Woolley)

## Gisborne/Wairoa

Sandy Bull reports a Northern Shoveller present at Gisborne. The bird, a male, is usually seen on a pond in a recreation area alongside Waikanae Beach.

The winter wader census was much as expected. Good flocks of 31 Wrybill and 43 South Island Pied Oystercatcher are at Muriwai Lagoon.

The usual flock of Variable Oystercatchers have gathered at Mahia - 55 this year.

Very high water levels at Whakaki have pushed birds onto the Korito area where there were 94 Banded Dotterels and seven Black-fronted Dotterels. The lone White Heron is on Korito. The 21 Royal Spoonbills moved from Whakaki to the Wairoa Lagoons when shooting opened and are still around.

Wairoa coastal lagoons are holding about 850 Pied Stilts but the usual horde of Spur-winged Plovers seem to have moved inland to keep their feet dry in this very wet winter. Finally a flock of 50 Little Black Shags were present at Oraka on 2 July.

(Geoff Foreman)

## Hawkes Bay

At our last meeting Karl Baker gave us an interesting talk on his Science Fair entry on Royal Spoonbills.

The census in June was carried out over two days. On the 10th we covered Ahuriri, Tukituki, East Clive and Waitangi. Of note were the Gull-billed Tern and a White-winged Black Tern at Ahuriri. The Asiatic Whimbrel seen in the summer appears to be wintering over. On Sunday 11 June we walked the Porangahau Estuary. A total of 86 Wrybill were seen - twenty more than were counted here last winter. A White Heron was seen by the Porangahau bridge, but no Red-necked Stints - unusual as there is usually a small number overwintering here. Also present were 55 Bar-tailed Godwits and 120 Banded Dotterels, plus SIPO.

Also in June was a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross which hit a fence near Hastings and broke its leg. It was cared for by the Napier Marineland.

A Royal Spoonbill seems to spend most of its time on the Clive River (the main flock of 56, recorded in April, dropping to the mid thirties by July, is at the Ahuriri), and if you are lucky you can see it with two White Herons and two Little Egrets all roosting in the same willow with Little Shags.

Our May field trip was to Mohi Bush, Maraetotora, where we found that the birdlife seems to have increased as a result of possum control. There is a lot of fruit on the trees and the bush generally looks healthier.

In June we visited local estuarine sites looking for Black-fronted Terns. We found 19 at Waitangi Estuary and were able to look at the plumages. Earlier in the week there were around thirty seen in a paddock at Elwood Road, Hastings.

(Christine McRae)

## Taranaki

We have had two rewarding trips over the last few months. In May we visited the East Taranaki back country. Seven Spotless Crakes were calling from a swamp in response to our tape. In a bush area twelve pigeons were seen in a group, probably a result of a fruiting tree on a ridge. Six NZ Robins were also reported among various more common bush birds.

On a trip to Egmont National Park in June, an even larger group of fifteen pigeons was observed. They were thought to be feeding on Wintera berries. Up to nine Tuis were calling and flying around together.

Other less common records from around the province were kiwis, heard at North Egmont. Also on Mt Egmont were a NZ Pipit running on the snow and a NZ Falcon.

Another falcon at the Mokau River attacked a Feral Pigeon which fell wounded into the river. The falcon then sat in a tree above the pigeon, presumably waiting until the observer left before dealing with the prey.

The Methanex plant was a site for birds again with a flock of many thousands of Starlings flying around it at dusk. A roost nearby is suspected of being the source, rather than our well known Sugarloaf Island roost.

Two records from non-members of OSNZ were received over the last few months - a detailed record of a Black-backed Gull nest from 20 December to 11 February, and records of seabirds observed in Taranaki waters from Kawhia to Wanganui.

(Erika Woodger)

## Manawatu

We seem to have had a fairly quiet winter in the Manawatu. There were fewer ducks on the estuary at Foxton during the shooting season. Locals tell us there were fewer duck shooters up-river this year so they did not need to use it as a safe haven. The 1995 Shoveler maximum was approximately 90, whereas there were 650 in 1994. We had our usual 25 or so Wrybills, 16-20 Bar-tailed Godwits and 250+ Pied Stilts.

Chestnut Teal were again seen by several people. Jim Moore reported a male on 6 and 7 May, and a mature male and two immatures on June 17/18 - these should prove a talking point for next year's AGM.

Sybil Creswell, our chief Royal Spoonbill spotter, did a wonderful job finding a group of birds using the northern bank of the Rangitikei River. Unproductive for wading birds in recent years, the river has apparently changed course, so we will keep an eye on it in future. 10 spoonbills were first seen on 25 March. Two of 24 had bands on 28 April, with four still present on an island in the river at the end of July. The maximum on the Manawatu was 58 on 6 May (three with bands, different from the Rangitikei birds). We are still waiting for information on the bands from the Banding Office.

There have been several beach patrols from Himatangi to Foxton Beach, mostly unproductive, which is very nice for the birds! The 23 July patrol was an exception when we found a Blue Penguin, Cape Pigeon, White-capped Mollmawk, several different prion species and two diving petrels. The most exciting find was a white phase Southern Giant Petrel in pristine condition on Hokio Beach on 20 May.

The eight members who made the long trip to the AGM on Stewart Island in May all thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Two people went to Mason Bay after the AGM, two hired a car and drove to Christchurch via the Catlins, and the Wasleys and Slacks spent a week tramping - firstly the Rakiura Track, then a very memorable trip in a water taxi to the Freshwater River landing in almost gale force winds before walking to Mason Bay. The hut was a very welcome sight as the last half hour's walk was in the dark. We found fifteen of the NZ Dotterels that Bev Woolley had noted in the log book of the hut, all hiding behind tussocks to keep out of the gale force winds.

In July we had our annual mid-year pot luck dinner in Palmerston North, and were able to show all the wonderful, and not so wonderful, slides and photographs from Stewart Island, and to share news with people who had not been able to attend.

In the next few weeks we are hoping to hear Andrea Booth talk about her Little Shearwater project as part of her MSc at Massey, and Isabel Catto on Hihi (Stitchbird) work, completed for her PhD.

We are looking forward to the arrival of the Arctic waders in September.

(Pam Slack)

## Wairarapa

As noted in the June issue of *OSNZ News* ten of our members attended the AGM on Stewart Island. They were all impressed with Stewart Island and the arrangements for the weekend and are already talking about returning for the next AGM there. Watch out Lloyd!

They travelled along the West Coast to Bluff and along the east coast for the return, with an inland excursion to Lake

Tekapo. 74 bird species were recorded, many being new to the travellers. Bellbirds amazed us with their frequency and song, being recorded at almost every stop along the way. Other notable species for us were a Little Egret and White Heron at Westport, 4 Far-eastern Curlews at Fortrose Estuary, thousands of Spotted Shags resting on the breakwater at Oamaru, Great Crested Grebe at Lake McGregor and Brown Creeper at Kowhai Bush at Kaikoura.

Back on the home front, a flock of 22 NZ Dabchick were recorded from a farm dam in May. Also in May a pair of Spur-winged Plovers with two chicks about two or three days old, seen on the 23rd.

A very interesting find made by one of our members high on the Tararua was a White-capped Mollmawk.

Black-fronted Dotterels had a difficult breeding season, with a series of high floods in both the Waingawa and Ruamahanga Rivers. We hope to survey this species on the Ruamahanga River later this year.

861 Australasian Gannets were counted in one hour flying past the settlement of Ngawi on Palliser Bay.

(Colin Scadden)

## Wellington

Having escaped much of Wellington's winter on an overseas trip I haven't participated in many activities around the region recently. The highlight for us was a day of the Farne Islands in the UK - birds above, below and on all sides of us; Razorbills, Guillemots, Puffins, Shags, Eider Ducks and several species of tern. It was a great experience.

Meanwhile... back in Wellington, the mapping scheme, wader survey, passerine banding and beach patrols all kept rolling along. The Stewart Island AGM sounded a great success. Congratulations to the organisers for providing the incentive for people to visit this part of New Zealand.

Evening meetings have included an insight into the life of a taxidermist at the Museum of New Zealand, provided by Noel Hyde, and from Jim Sinner some great slides of the Antarctic and South Georgia.

Coming up is the chance to help survey the Karori Waterworks as part of an extensive plan to turn the area in the heart of Wellington into a wildlife sanctuary.

Birding in the city has been nicely described in our newsletter by Ralph Powlesland who watched and enjoyed gannets, assorted shags and a Reef Heron, all within walking distance of home. We don't really need to go overseas to enjoy interesting birdwatching, do we?

(Ros Batchelor)

## Marlborough

January was the annual transfer of Fluttering Shearwaters from Long Island to Maud Island. We were well short of the 100 birds, only thirty being collected. Many burrows were very wet and some had collapsed, possibly due to the November floods. This is the fifth year of the project, which is expected to continue for two more years. Last November one bird returned to Maud Island but only stayed overnight.

Kiwis were surveyed during the summer at Long Island. Elsewhere in the Marlborough Sounds, a pair of Saddlebacks nested on Motuara Island, with possibly more.

There were thirty Yellowheads at Mt Stokes which indicates that this colony is growing. DoC is to carry out a poison drop for possums in this area this year.

Interesting birds in the region have included 59+ Australian Coots at Taylor Dam, two each of Reef Heron and Siberian Tattler at Kaikoura and a Glossy Ibis at the Lower Wairau. No Cattle Egrets have been seen this year so far.

(Beverley North)

## Canterbury

The winter Silvereye banding in Townsend's Orchards, Halswell, has ended for the season with over 400 new birds banded. In all we have caught 391 Silvereyes, with 109 retraps, 13 Bellbirds with two retraps, plus Greenfinches, House Sparrows, a Starling and a Chaffinch.

Winter has brought a record number of Great Crested Grebes to Lake Forsyth - 65 in June. Also in June were 19 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in Prices Valley on Banks Peninsula. The Australian Little Grebe put in its usual appearance at Taranaki Creek in July.

White-winged Black Terns reached an amazing 13 in number at Cooper's Lagoon - three were still present in July. We have also had a Little Egret at Lake Ellesmere, two Chestnut-breasted Shelducks at Cooper's Lagoon and one at Ki-Wainono, plus, in late July, two 'Commic' Terns and a Little Tern at the Ashley Estuary.

Our past two field trips have been cancelled due to severe weather, including the Ashburton Lakes survey, where they had an additional foot of snow on the night prior to the trip - on top of what they already had!

By contrast, evening meetings have been well attended despite the cold. Paul Sagar brought us up to date with Buller's Mollmawk studies on the Snares. Five birds fitted with transmitters revealed much information on where the birds feed away from the nest. The population also appears to have increased, despite long-line fishing.

In the June meeting Chris Challies shared his recent experiences in the

subantarctic. The principal aim was penguins, of which we have 12 of the 15 species. 11 of these were seen, the exception being Fiordland Crested.

Euan Kennedy recounted details of work on Chatham Petrels on Rangatira Island. The species is critically endangered and studies to date have not produced a means of increasing the population. Rangatira is heavily burrowed, and special 'racquets' are strapped to workers' feet to minimise damage to burrows. In addition, two ingenious versions of 'state houses' have been produced; placed in burrows, these increase the birds' security (especially in the face of fierce competition from Broad-billed Prions), and they have taken to their new homes very well. It is hoped that the vulnerable and beautiful Chatham Petrel can be saved.

(Sheila Petch)

## Southland

We were pleased with the number of people who travelled south to the Stewart Island AGM. Special thanks to Phil Rhodes and John Hall-Jones who lead the trips to Milford Sound and Mason Bay.

Fifteen Far-eastern Curlews were reported in May from the Fortrose Estuary - this is an unusually high number. Pete McClelland reports Spur-winged Plovers on the Auckland Islands. We think this is a new record.

Jamie Wood and Chris Garden observed a harrier grabbing a 50 cm eel from the surface of the Waihopai River. Lionel Robb reports large numbers of Black Shags gorging themselves on lampreys in the Mataura River. One regurgitated a 30 cm kokopu when he startled it on his farm.

We seem to be having a repeat of the irruption of southern birds that we saw three years ago in September. A Blue Petrel was picked up 15 km inland and the following day a Kerguelen Petrel and two Antarctic Petrels were found dead on Oreti Beach. A small number of junior members continues to do a weekly beach patrol of about 6 km. There will be a Science Fair project next year analysing the beach patrol results over the past five years.

Where are the Cattle Egrets? Very few were reported from Southland. The regular flock of about 30 returned to Wallacetown and there were just a few other individuals.

Do you know that a Starling has about 4,900 feathers? Why not do some counts as a way of filling in a quiet evening?

(Lloyd Esler)

Office use:  **N.Z. MOULT CARD**

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF CARD

Species  Greenfinch

District  Wellington

Locality  Patone

Date 24 1 1995 Observer A. Feather

Band/ museum number nil Sex  F Age  AD

CONDITION OF BIRD: (tick) Wild  Captive  Living  Museum specimen  Recently dead  Long dead

MOULT SUMMARY: (tick) In moult  Not in moult  Is plumage new or old?

WING: Left or right?  R Score each feather 0 - 5

Inner tertials  
19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10

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Tertials      Secondaries      Primaries      Outer wing →

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

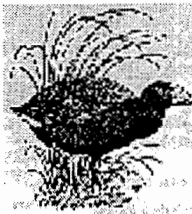
TAIL: Left half of tail      Score each feather 0 - 5      Right half of tail

6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0

COVERTS AND REST OF PLUMAGE: Score each region

Bastard wing	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>	Underwing coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>	Head	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>
Primary coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>	Uppertail coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>	Undertail coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>
Greater coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>	Upperparts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>	Underparts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>
Lesser and median coverts	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>2</u>	Score: 0 = All old      3 = Middle      5 = All new 2 = Beginning      4 = Ending			

COMMENTS: Sample moult card for demonstration only



Nankeen Kestrel, Waikato, April 1995.  
Photo: Bev Woolley

**O.S.N.Z MOULT SCHEME**

SUMMARY FORM FOR BIRDS NOT IN MOULT

Observer's name and address: A. Feather  
Po Box 1234567  
Patone, Wellington

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF FORM

Office use only	Location	Date	Museum/ band no.	Species	Age	Sex	Condition • live • museum • recent dead • long dead	Status • wild • captive	Plumage • old • new
	Patone	2-1-95	B56789	Greenfinch	Ad	F	live	wild	old
	Patone	2-1-95	B56790	House Sparrow	Ad	F	live	wild	old
	Patone	2-1-95	B56791	Greenfinch	Ad	M	live	wild	old
	Sea town	3-5-95	B56792	House Sparrow	FW	M	live	wild	new
	Sea town	3-5-95	A123456	Silvereye	Ad		live	wild	new
	Sea town	3-5-95	A123457	Silvereye	Ad		live	wild	new
	Sea town	3-5-95	A123458	Silvereye	Ad		live	wild	new
	Sea town	3-5-95	A123459	Silvereye	Ad		live	wild	new
	Sea town	3-5-95	A123460	Silvereye	Ad		live	wild	new



**DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER ISSUE IS 10 NOVEMBER**