

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. 77 December, 1995

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

The Waikaia Forest Mohua Survey 1995

Held over the weekend of September 15-17 1995, this Otago branch expedition drew an excellent response from 35 members and supporters. The shearers' quarters at the historic Glenaray Station accommodated everyone. We used the camp kitchen to cook the excellent meals that had been provided by our organising group, and we enjoyed the use of the dining room and lounge in the evenings.

On Friday evening, using maps and descriptions of suggested traverses previously prepared by the Society members who planned the weekend, people decided what part of the forest they would explore the next day. Most chose to make the steep climb up and down through the bush on the western or eastern side of the valley. Others took the riverside track to the upper swing bridge to cross the Waikaia River and return on the other side.

On Saturday some drizzle dampened the bush but not the enthusiasm of the ornithologists. A few snowflakes fell on one party who climbed to Titan Rock. The afternoon was fine, as was Sunday.

Darkness was falling on Saturday when the last party returned to Glenaray. A hot shower with the luxury of under-floor heating was much appreciated. Around the fireplace after dinner there was discussion of the day's work, an impromptu concert and a slide show on the birds and other wildlife of the subantarctic islands, given by Peter McClelland of DoC Invercargill.

For Sunday's activities, members were free to visit any part of the forest. Many drove the length of the bush road to the open country beyond, leading up to the snow-covered Old Man Range.

As a result of all this activity, cards were passed in for more than 40 one

kilometre squares. Most cards included a count as well as a list of the species detected.

Mohua (or Yellowheads), the prime target of the survey, were found in only five places. Two of these were at Deep Creek, an area where I have known the species to be living through the ten years that I have been visiting the Waikaia Forest. One Mohua was in an adjacent square. Two birds were seen from the riverside track near the foot of the Titan Rock track - a place where they had been reported to DoC staff in February 1995. Only one quite new occurrence was found. A group of three or four Mohua were seen at the northern end of the conservation area at Whitecoomb Creek, in trees beside the road gate. For the record, the map squares containing Mohua were Series 260, Garvie, F43, Squares 0010, 0112, 0113, 0213, 0415.

Four of the five Mohua sites could be reached by driving along the bush road. Thanks to all those who tramped up and down the hills looking for lost populations of Mohua that just might live on in some of little-visited gullies. We can conclude that the Mohua is indeed a rare bird at Waikaia.

Another hole-nester, on the other hand, is doing remarkably well. Kakariki, Yellow-crowned, were flying around almost everywhere. Flocks of up to ten birds were seen at close quarters by many of our groups. Other bush birds were present, mostly in good numbers. A few species, however, were strangely uncommon. Kereru were seen by only one party, and Fantails were uncommon.

A full list of the species follows. Inside the brackets is the number of map squares (out of 40) in which the birds were found. These figures cannot be used as a census

of the species. For instance, some Redpoll flocks of 100+ were seen. Some species, for example Skylark, were not seen in the bush, but they were within squares which held forest.

Yellow-crowned Parakeet (29), Grey Warbler, Bellbird (27), Chaffinch (25), NZ Robin (23), Blackbird (22), Rifleman (21), Yellow-breasted Tit (18), Redpoll (17), Brown Creeper (12), Greenfinch (10), Paradise Shelduck (9), Marsh Harrier (8), Song Thrush, Yellowhammer (8), Mohua, NZ Falcon, Silvereye, Australian Magpie (5), Dunnock, Fantail, Skylark (4), House Sparrow (3), NZ Kingfisher, Spur-winged Plover, Goldfinch, NZ Pipit (2), Black-backed Gull, NZ Pigeon, Morepork, Starling and possibly Kea (1).

Also seen at Glenaray Station and Piano Flat - Black Shag, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Mallard and South Island Pied Oystercatcher. Total number of species - 37.

MALCOLM FOORD

Visit to Stanley Is, Mercury Group

Despite fears to the contrary, Saturday 23 September dawned fair, and 25 Waikato OSNZ members and friends had an extremely enjoyable day trip to Stanley (Atiu) Island in the Mercury Group.

We left aboard MV "Calypso" from Whitianga. Several Blue Penguins were sighted, along with a few Common Diving Petrels, Red-billed Gulls and gannets, but the sea was generally too calm for many seabirds to be so far inshore. Roosting Pied Shags were seen on various rock stacks.

Apart from one barefoot encounter with a kina, transfer from boat to boulder

beach and back was accomplished uneventfully. Black Shore Skinks (*L. smithi*) were very much in evidence, sunning themselves in the crevices between the rocks. From the boulders we moved up a track through vegetation that was predominantly mahoe and pohutukawa. Saddlebacks could be heard calling and we soon spotted our first bird.

With the removal of rats and rabbits from the island only three years previously, the leaf litter has built up, with a corresponding increase in the insect population on which the Saddlebacks feed. The original 30 birds transferred to Stanley Island from Cuvier Island have now increased to between 3-500 birds. We looked into roosting and nest boxes, but none were currently occupied.

Saddlebacks were constantly in view including a pair exhibiting courtship feeding behaviour. We also watched several Kakariki, Grey Warblers, a Bellbird and a Kereru. Grey-faced Petrel burrows were scattered along the track and several empty egg shells were found, plus a whole egg belonging to a smaller petrel - possibly a Pycroft's Petrel, which are known to nest on the island. Two members of the party heard a petrel call from a burrow, which they attributed to the latter species.

We would like to thank Phil Thomson from DoC for his informative leadership, and for giving up most of his weekend to accompany us.

TRUDY KEENE

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Nominations for Council

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following Council member retires in May 1995, and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created.

Raewyn Empson (Secretary) and the vacancy created by the resignation of Brian Bell

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1996, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated. Retiring officers are eligible for re-election.

Notice of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1995 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1996 in writing and must be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1995 OSNZ Annual Conference and AGM will be held at Foxton Beach on Saturday 1 June 1996.

Raewyn Empson
Hon. Secretary
P.O. Box 12397 Wellington

Brian Enting - 1943-1995

Members may have heard in media reports that long time OSNZ member Brian Enting died in a road accident on 26 September, while on his way to photograph recent activity at Mt Ruapehu.

Brian was best known for his wonderful, evocative natural history photographs. Two of his many publications which grace many OSNZ members' libraries include *'Neath the Mantle of Rangi (1976)* and *The Ancient Islands (1983, with Les Molloy; the book was winner of the New Zealand Book Awards)*. He has also published on Maori herbal remedies and healing, in numerous calendars and overseas publications and was currently working on books on New Zealand lichens and volcanoes.

Brian is survived by his wife Sally and their three children. Our heartfelt sympathy goes to them all.

From the President's Desk (Knee!)

This seems to have been a period when your President's life has been dominated by islands and the OSNZ constitutional review. In the latter part of August I attended the First World Conference on Albatrosses held in Hobart, Tasmania. With some 120 people from eleven countries attending, most of the worldwide albatross research programmes were represented, along with people from the fishing industry, fisheries research and control organisations, NGOs such as WWF and Royal Forest & Bird, and the RAOU. New Zealand was well represented with at least seventeen persons, most of whom were members of the Society.

Over a period of three days the conference had 37 spoken papers on systematics, population dynamics and monitoring, the impacts of heavy metals, pesticides and plastic ingestion, diet and energetics, foraging strategies, relationships with fisheries and the effects of the fisheries by-catch, and a historical overview of human-induced mortality in the 18th and 19th centuries. A further 37 poster papers covered other material under similar topics as the spoken material. A further two days were spent as a workshop to look at the interactions between albatrosses and fisheries and explored ways in which any interactions might be mitigated.

All in all a fascinating week, with much new information being presented, and certainly making clear that not all albatrosses are being affected by the same things and that 'The Albatross' so often referred to by the media has a wide range of lifestyles and habits among the currently recognisable 24 taxa. Probably the most memorable statistic related to the propensity for the two albatrosses at

Midway Island in the North Pacific (Laysan and Black-footed) to scavenge plastic bits and other rubbish at sea. It has been estimated that there are from 5 to 9 million plastic cigarette lighters, brought in and regurgitated by the albatrosses, scattered over the island - mostly of Japanese origin.

Following the conference, Gillian and I had a relaxing ten days at Lord Howe Island, where the whole island is a World Heritage site, 600 km north east of Sydney. It was not as warm as usual, with the Australian mainland getting unusually late and severe snows. However, a most spectacular island, dominated by two massive peaks and a large lagoon, with the most southerly coral reefs (both soft and hard) in the world. Like New Zealand, the bird fauna on the main island has suffered from the presence of humans, though rats did not arrive until 1918. The story of the captive rearing and recovery of the Lord Howe Woodhen (very like our Weka in lifestyle) rivals that of our own Black Robin. The island group is also home to a wide range of seabirds - in the space of an hour around the Admiralty Islands we saw eight breeding or pre-breeding species. The whole island is scrupulously tidy and only has some 280 residents, with a maximum of 300-350 tourists possible at any one time. A great place for quiet walking and relaxation, with friendly locals who run a wide range of activities designed to ensure your enjoyment of their natural heritage. Other than tourists, the main source of income is the harvesting and propagation from seed of the endemic *Kentia* palms which are exported all over the world as rooted seedlings direct from the island.

Two days after my return, the Constitutional Review Committee met for two and a half days to consider the very interesting 26 formal submissions and a lot of extra material from RRs in response to other requests for information. The result was a complete redrafting of the constitution. Some of this related to the modernisation of the language and the changed requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act, but other major areas covered included the aims and objects of the Society, categories of membership, operation of Council and officers of the Society, a recognition of the role of regions, RRs, their election and their responsibility for regions within the Society.

As with any review of this type, not everyone will be totally satisfied, as there always has to be a delicate balance between various extremes of opinion. Council has approved the draft, with some amendments, and there is now a careful check being made for any inconsistencies. The replacement of the existing constitution with the new one will be moved as a Notice of Motion at the next AGM. All members will have the

opportunity to see the new draft with their notices for the AGM. All members will also have the opportunity to indicate their preference for acceptance or rejection of the new constitution in a postal opinion poll to be taken before the AGM. Though this poll will not be a vote, as that can only be done by those attending the AGM, it will give those members at the AGM an indication of the general feelings of members. As some of the actions specified in the new constitution (if passed) will take about twelve months to come into effect, it is expected that there will be about 9-12 months before any further amendments might be proposed.

One of the most interesting things coming out of the review and out of a series of questions I have been asking RRs, is the evidence that many members have been giving a lot of thought to how their Society should be organised and the different things that need to be done to make ornithology in New Zealand a viable and useful vocation. Some of the suggestions made will be looked at in more detail over the coming months as some did not have a direct relationship with the constitution. The very interesting debate to find definitions of what is meant by "ornithologist" and "birder" has proved a very entertaining exercise for at least one regional meeting. There seems to be an unfortunate perception among some members that an ornithologist can only be a 'professional' scientist. No doubt you will see some of these definitions in due course and I hope that you will feel free to contribute some of your own, serious or not so serious.

Soon after the Council meeting at the end of September, it was again pack my bags and off to the Chathams, where for the past month I have been 'albatrossing' on The Pyramid and, currently, on Little Sister Island. This is always an entertaining experience, if only to ensure each morning that your gear (and you) are still on the island after a rough night. As I write there is a blustery gale from the south west, with gusts of up to 50 knots rattling the tent. The Royals and Northern Buller's are well into egg-laying, with the peak expected about 12 November, so each day gets a little busier. I have had with me up to now Gary Nunn, from the Natural History Museum in New York, who has been unravelling the DNA phylogeny of albatrosses. He is finding that the real birds and a close exposure to the weather can be even more interesting in real life, rather than remotely at the end of a computer, especially when a Royal lands on top of your tent after demolishing the radio aerial, and when the behaviour of the 40 pairs trying to nest within ten metres of the same tent keeps you awake half the night. Interspersed with this is the Northern Giant Petrel chick which has, with nagging tones, a propensity for asking for feeds at strange times of the night.

Last night on the radio we talked to Lionel Lobb at Gorge Road, near Invercargill, a long time keen member of the Society, who was keeping radio watch for a party visiting the Antipodes Islands. Later in the evening we had an opportunity to compare notes with them. Somewhat enviously, I suspect, as they had been having a spell of hot sunny weather and were "suffering" a little from sunburn.

No doubt many of you will be planning, or have already planned your ornithological travels over the summer. Rest assured that there is always something new or different to be seen and recorded. Remarkably, many little surprises lie waiting among some of the species we often think are known the best. There is always an opportunity for everyone to observe and contribute to the knowledge needed to maintain our fragile bird fauna. A prime requirement is to ensure that the information is recorded, and to use the publications of the Society to ensure that others have the opportunity to share in your experience. It is also an opportunity to encourage new members, especially those who have recently joined, by joining them in your activity.

As the year ends I have to record, with regret, the resignation of Brian Bell from Council due to other commitments which have recently kept him overseas for extended periods. This brings to an end a long period on Council and all members have been well served by Brian's unstinting enthusiasm for the study of birds. He will continue to take an active role in the courses for junior members. A welcome to Janet Snell as RR in the Far North and thanks to Libby Price who has handed on this role. At the same time, a grateful thank you to the many people in the Society who have given of their time and talents so willingly over the past few months to ensure that the Society runs to your benefit. Don't just be a taker in the Society - get in there and participate, and give others a hand. Sometimes it's even more fun!

Finally, may I wish you all a happy and safe Festive Season and New Year.

Happy birding

CHRISTOPHER ROBERTSON
President

Field Study Course - Jan 1997

Planning is already well underway to hold a Field Study Course centred on the Kaipara Harbour and its environs from Saturday 4 January to Saturday 11 January 1997 (note the year!).

The main purpose of the week will be to conduct a complete wader count of the harbour and to attempt a survey of species nesting on the Kaipara. With our Black-billed Gulls continuing their northward

expansion (nests are currently under way at Shell Island, Taporā), who knows what this survey will reveal? This will be your opportunity to experience cannon netting and wader banding, plus day trips to the east coast where possibly the world's rarest subspecies of tern nests, and where we now have a small population of Shore Plover.

The venue for the course will be Rodney College, Wellsford, and accommodation will be in tents, camper vans or on the floor of the gymnasium and whare wananga. Participants will need to supply their own bedding, cutlery and crockery. We supply the food. Rodney College has a lovely audio-visual theatre for evening speakers. Wellsford has all amenities and for those with special sleeping needs there are two motels and clean, reasonably priced rooms at the local hotel.

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust is very generously offering members' rates for accommodation at their centre in the Firth of Thames to any OSNZ member wishing to stopover at Miranda in the weeks immediately preceding or following the Kaipara Field Study Course. Please make your bookings with Keith Woodley, Miranda Naturalists' Trust Centre, Miranda Coast Road, R.D.1, Pokeno, phone/fax (09) 232 2781.

Please mark the dates on your calendar now and plan to attend! There will be something for everyone - seabirds, shorebirds, waders and wetlands. More information in the next issue of OSNZ News, but in the meantime any enquiries should be directed to Gwenda Pulham, 2/1 Parkhill Road, Birkenhead, Auckland 10, phone (09) 480 5535.

GWENDA PULHAM

— REMINDER —
SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1996
ARE NOW DUE

AGM and Conference - 1996

The OSNZ Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held on Thursday 30 May- Monday 3 June 1996, at the Boys' Brigade Camp, Foxton Beach, Manawatu.

To whet the appetite of members and encourage them to attend the 1996 AGM, we include details to date of the programme and venue. A principal attraction will be the proximity of the estuary and mouth of the Manawatu River. At Queen's Birthday weekend, the time of the 1996 AGM, there should be plenty of ducks and other waterfowl, and a flock of Royal Spoonbills.

Foxton Beach is a small seaside town approximately 45 km south west of Palmerston North, from which airport a pick-up and delivery service will operate. Book those super-thrifty airfares now - remember, it is Queen's Birthday weekend!

The Boys' Brigade camp is used by schools and clubs in the region. It is adequate but by no means luxurious, and has a good-sized kitchen and dining hall which will be used for meals, social events, the Scientific Day and AGM. There are five bunk rooms which can accommodate 58 people, one with an en suite. There are also four caravan points and plenty of space for tents. You will need your own pillow, sleeping bag, towel etc.

We have also booked two holiday flats (8 beds in total), five cabins at the motor camp (25 beds), and five units at the Foxton Beach Motel (18 beds). The additional accommodation is within 15 minutes walk of the Boys' Brigade camp. All have cooking facilities.

The provisional programme for the weekend is :

Thursday evening - Council meeting
 Friday all day - Council meeting
 Friday afternoon - RRs meeting
 Friday evening - joint RRs/Council meeting
 Saturday - Scientific Day, 8.30 am - 3 pm
 AGM, 4 - 6 pm
 Dinner 6.30 - 7.30 pm, possibly followed by continuation of AGM/social evening
 Sunday - Field Trips
 Mid-year dinner and social evening
 Monday - Field Trip

The field trips will consist, on Sunday, of a visit to Kapiti Island (maximum 50 participants, and weather permitting), or various bush reserves in the Manawatu and Wanganui districts, and on Monday to the Manawatu Estuary and a beach patrol.

Note that the programme has yet to be approved by Council.

Registration forms will be sent with the March *Notornis* and *OSNZ News*. Information about the conference in the meantime can be obtained by writing to OSNZ Manawatu, 30 Ihaka Street, Palmerston, or phoning (06) 357 2966 (evening) or (06) 357 5271.

We look forward to seeing you there.
 PAM SLACK

OSNZ Scientific Day - call for papers

As at the Nelson conference in 1994, there will be a Scientific Day at the 1996 AGM at Foxton Beach, Manawatu.

The purpose of this day is to enable OSNZ members to present their results, be they private spare-time research by dedicated members or work- or university-related studies. All are equally welcome!

This is an ideal way to spread your results around, or get feedback and advice from other ornithologists on ongoing research. The last Scientific Day proved extremely interesting and it is anticipated that this one will fully live up to the standard of its predecessor.

Talks will be 15 minutes plus 5 minutes for questions. There are twelve available slots.

In addition to submitted talks, this year there will also be invited addresses, including one by Dr David Lambert, Chair of Ecology at Massey University, on the use of molecular methods in ornithology.

The programme for the day is as follows:

0830 - 0930	invited talk by David Lambert
0930 - 1030	3 submitted talks
1030 - 1100	morning tea
1100 - 1220	4 submitted talks
1220 - 1330	lunch
1330 - 1530	6 submitted talks
1530 - 1600	afternoon tea

As in Nelson, there will be a prize for the best paper. Posters are also encouraged, especially from students. Don't wait until after your study is completed to tell us about it!

Please send a title and a one page summary of your proposed talk or poster by 15 January 1996 to: Phil Battley, Department of Ecology, Massey University, Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North, fax (06) 350 5623, E-mail: P.F.Battley@massey.ac.nz.

Remember: the day can be as great as you make it, so get your offer in soon!

PHIL BATTLEY/GÁBOR LÖVEI

Spoonbill Census - winter 1995



I am pleased to inform you that this census turned out to be a very good one. For the first time we passed the 600 mark. To be precise we reached 610 birds. The majority once again were found at the top of both islands, Northland and Nelson.

It would not be fair to compare this winter's total with the first winter census of a very conservative interpretation of the numbers of Royal Spoonbills in 1990. Broadly speaking however, we have approximately twice the number now than

in 1990. One wonders when these numbers will level off.

The results per region:

Far North	Parengarenga Harbour	52
	Rangaunu Harbour	107
Northland	Kaipara Harbour Nth	5
	Whangarei Harbour	27
Auckland	Kaipara Harbour Sth	1
	Warkworth Sandspit	3
	Mangere Sewage Ponds	38
Sth Akld	Firth of Thames	1
	Clarks Beach	3
Waikato	Kawhia Harbour	32
B.O.P.	Kaituna Cut	22
Gisborne	Wairoa Estuary	21
Manawatu	Rangitikei River	4
	Manawatu Estuary	48
H.Bay	Tukituki Estuary	1
	Ahuriri Estuary	42
Wairarapa	Lake Onoke	3
	Jury's Island	5
	Lake Wairarapa	15
Wellington	Waikanae River	3
Nelson	Collingwood	6
	Motueka Estuary	36
	Farewell Spit	74
	Waimea Estuary	20
Marlbgth	Wairau Lagoons	10
Canterbury	Avon/Heathcote Est.	26
	Lake Ellesmere	3
	Coopers Lagoon	1
Otago	North Otago	1
TOTAL		610

Many thanks to all who made this census the best one ever.

Although the Waitangi Day census has been discontinued, the winter census is still on. Early in 1996 I hope to have a date set for this census.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

Kerguelen Petrel in Waikato

The Waikato OSNZ region continues to be visited by vagrant petrels. On August 23, a Kerguelen Petrel was handed into DoC, Hamilton, after being found at Te Akau, 12 km north of Raglan. The bird was in poor condition and only accepted squid when forced to. It did not survive the night.

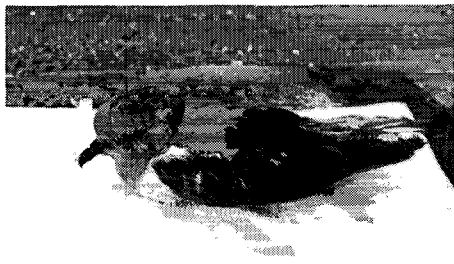
The bird was examined more closely the following morning, particularly with reference to the plumage and bill. The plumage had distinctive white 'shoulder' markings when the wings were folded, part of the white underwing plumage. The bill was unusually short and thin for the size of the bird.

Over 70% of these birds are found dead in the Auckland West area, and only a few turn up alive. Some may die with a full gut, but empty gizzard (even after being force fed), showing that they have no energy left to absorb food (Reed, *Notornis*:28 p.240). This may have been the case here. As breeding birds are on their

natal colonies at the Kerguelen and nearby southern Indian Ocean islands, it is likely that this specimen was a non-breeder and/or juvenile.

Waikato beach patrols have also picked up dead specimens in July (1), August (4) and September (1), from Waikorea, Taharoa (in the Taranaki region) and Kawhia beaches respectively. Beaches near Auckland and Wellington have also reported wrecks.

PAUL CUMING



Kerguelen Petrel at Hamilton, August 1995.
Photo: Paul Cuming.

Gull and Tern survey

A reminder that the Society is investing considerable funds in this breeding season's national survey of Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern breeding colonies. As full a coverage as possible is the only way of ensuring that the survey is a success.



Nesting adult Black-billed Gull and chick, Ashley River, November 1994.
Photo - Tony Crocker

A massive amount of activity has already taken place in the regions, locating and counting in those that have nesting Black-billed Gulls. The season for White-fronted Tern breeding is reaching its peak. Look at what the birds are doing, and if you locate any that are nesting in your summer travels, please inform the local RR. Don't assume that they will have been counted, as both gulls and terns are capricious nesters and are likely to adopt or abandon traditional nesting areas for no apparent reason.

New Beach Patrol regions

From January 1995, the Auckland West (AW) and Auckland East (AE) beach patrol regions have been split to include two new regions. A new region, Northland West (NW) has been formed, which extends down from Cape Maria van Diemen to Pouto at the entrance to Kaipara Harbour. The original Auckland West has been shrunk to include the coast from Kaipara Harbour to Kawhia Harbour. On the east coast, a new region (Northland East, NE) has been formed which extends from Cape Maria van Diemen, along the Northland coast to Bream Tail (just north of Mangawhai Harbour). The original Auckland East now extends from Bream Tail to the Firth of Thames and up to Cape Colville, and includes Great Barrier and Little Barrier Islands.

The reasons for these changes are partly because they were requested by Northland region members and partly because the former Auckland West and Auckland East included a large proportion of the cards sent into the scheme, in addition to the largest numbers of seabirds reported. By splitting these regions it will be easier to determine if seabird wrecks extend northwards over the entire coastline, and how far south tropical species are located by patrollers.

In addition to announcing the new regions, I have also included an example of a beach patrol card completed in the way which is most appropriate for downloading onto the beach patrol database. Can members please fill in cards as shown in the illustration.

Finally a reminder for all those people who haven't quite got around to filling in cards for 1994 beach patrols. I need these cards immediately if they are to be included in the 1994 *Notornis* beach patrol summary. Please get them to me by 31 January at the latest. And if you have any 1995 cards still to send, I'll need these by 1 April so they can be summarised for the annual report presented at the AGM. Dig out those notebooks!

GRAEME TAYLOR
Convenor, Beach Patrol Scheme

Falcon Survey

The Raptor Association and Department of Conservation national survey of breeding New Zealand Falcons is now in its second year (see *OSNZ News* No. 73). 47 probable nest sites were reported by members and the public last year. This spring and summer assistance will be needed to monitor the breeding success of these pairs.

It is intended to monitor the birds initially for a period of five years, in order to obtain data on breeding success which will assist in future management of the species. OSNZ members interested in helping with the survey are asked to contact their Regional Representative, local DoC office or me (94 Plateau Rd, Upper Hutt) for further information.

Reports of new nest sites will also be gratefully received (see *OSNZ News* 73 item for details required).

STEVE LAWRENCE

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND		Kilometres of Beach	District	Date of Patrol					
BEACH PATROL CARD		5.0	AE	4.11.96					
Name of Beach	Pakiri (from south end northwards)		Total Seabirds	22					
Observer and Address	Graeme Taylor Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington		Freshness Categories						
Previous Weather and Remarks	Strong Easterlies		A Fresh						
			B Decaying						
			C Dried						
			D Skeleton						
Species Found	Total Number Found	Age			Freshness				Ident by
		Adult	Juv.	Unk.	A	B	C	D	
Sooty Shearwater	10			10	5	2	2	1	GT
Diving Petrel	4			4	1		3		"
Little Blue Penguin	5			5	1	2	1	1	"
Grannet	1	1					1		"
Red-billed Gull	2	1	1						"

Myna Matters

In the last decade my wife and I have been privileged to be able to visit many islands in the Pacific region, including some of the hundreds within French Polynesia, and Fiji and the Cook Islands. Wherever we have been we were struck by the numbers of Indian Mynas which frequented every grassy patch, coastal clearing and village street.

I have made a point of discussing the presence of the bird at every opportunity with local Pacific islands people, and the answers we received varied considerably - from young people who had so little interest in birds that they were unaware that the chattering bird at the entrance to the hotel was a myna, to those that immediately deplored its presence, as, in their view, it was responsible for the near-extinction of all of their native birds, many of which they had not seen at all for many years. We certainly looked out everywhere we went for birds other than mynas and saw only occasionally different species.

I wonder therefore if there have been any studies made on the effect of the species on our own native birds. I can find no reference to any such material, nor is it commented on adversely in any of the handbooks on birds of the tropical Pacific.

It is my view that the bird needs the closest study to determine whether, for example, destruction of nests has serious implications for smaller species. Geoff Moon has indicated to me that on two occasions he has seen mynas evict kingfishers from their nests in clay banks. In one instance the eggs were eaten. Is its presence beneficial, as was suggested when it was introduced? I have not seen one ever take a wasp, a reason, I read, for its presence.

R.A. RINGER

Brian Bell resigns

Council has accepted with regret the resignation of Brian Bell as councillor of the Society. Among Brian's many commitments, his current role takes him on frequent, extended overseas trips and he therefore feels unable to do the Society's work full justice.

The Society is indebted to Brian for a long period of dedicated service, especially in various Council roles, and most recently as President until he stood down in 1995. He is playing a key role in the preparation for the junior course early in 1996.

The vacated position on Council will not be replaced until the normal election cycle in the new year.

In the meantime we wish Brian well in his ventures - no doubt he will be called upon from time to time for assistance when at home.

CHRIS ROBERTSON

Eel Predation

Vigorous daily bathing, especially during warmer months, is an important component in the behaviour of a number of New Zealand's forest birds. Although bathing and drinking is usually considered a 'low risk' behaviour, observations on Little Barrier Island suggest that this is not always the case.

On the island, many streams either dry up completely or form small pools which are frequently visited during summer by a variety of forest bird species. Inspection of the margins of one such pool adjacent to the grave of Robert Hunter-Blair on Te Maraeroa revealed the chewed remnants (wings and legs) of an adult Red-crowned Parakeet and a NZ Kingfisher. Circumstantial evidence also suggested that Brown Teal ducklings may also have been taken.

The culprit appeared to be a large Long-finned Eel, approximately one metre long, which had taken up residence in the pool as the stream dried out. If this pool was cautiously approached, the top of the eel's head could often be seen motionless near the surface of the turbid water. Lying in wait in such a fashion the eel would have had every opportunity to attack a variety of birds while they were drinking or attending to their ablutions.

Although this form of predation (at least for forest birds) may seem rather unusual, Long-finned Eels are known to include birds occasionally, especially ducklings, in their diet.

TERRY GREENE

Volunteers wanted - Mokoia Island

Volunteers are needed to assist with two studies on Mokoia Island, Lake Rotorua, conducted by students at the Department of Ecology at Massey University. The island has been in the news of late with a visit by HRH Prince Philip in his capacity as Patron of the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

A study of Moreporks on Mokoia Island started in November 1995. The island contains a healthy population of the birds, as well as a variety of other birds, with such threatened species as Saddleback and Hihi (Stitchbird) having been translocated in the past few years.

The Department of Conservation is planning an aerial poison drop to eradicate mice from the island, thereby leaving it free of introduced mammalian predators. Our object is to investigate the effects of this Brodifacoum poison drop, scheduled for June/July 1996. We'll be studying the breeding biology of the Moreporks before and after the drop and investigating the survival of these birds through the poisoning operation. Also we will examine

the diet of the birds, and compare their diets before and after the drop, to see if other animals are put at risk, especially birds such as Hihi and Saddleback.

The study will continue for two years, including two breeding seasons. A large amount of information will need to be collected. I would appreciate the help of volunteers, especially with banding, fitting transmitters, tracking birds and night work.

A study of Hihi breeding behaviour started in October 1994, after Hihi were transferred to Mokoia. We are interested in volunteers willing to observe birds during daily activities associated with breeding.

As a volunteer you will develop or enhance skills such as:

- band reading
- behavioural observations
- mist netting
- plant identification
- honeyeater food preparation
- radio tracking

and will also be able to apply or learn skills such as:

- cooking
- organising data
- hot pool relaxation and meditation
- fun sharing!

Anyone interested in being a volunteer should contact Brent Stephenson or Isabel Castro at the Department of Ecology, Massey University, Private Bag, Palmerston North, fax (06) 350-5623. A message can be left by calling (025) 460 906 or (06) 350 5315. Thank you for your interest.

BRENT STEPHENSON
AND
ISABEL CASTRO

BP Conservation Programme

The second year that funds are available to entrants world wide has seen the total value rise to around \$100,000 in the BP Conservation Programme, organised by BirdLife International and Fauna and Flora International. Projects must address international conservation priorities, and should involve participants from the host country as well as from overseas and include undergraduates.

BP and the organisers are very keen to see applications from the widest possible spectrum of specialities and geographical areas. However, as advice was only received in October, action will need to be taken swiftly, as applications close on 31 December 1995.

Further details regarding application criteria and a project screening form are available from the Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

Pukeko - Left or Right?

I would like to undertake a study of whether Pukeko are left or right footed, or ambidextrous. In order to solve the riddle, I am enlisting the help of all observant members and friends.

Every time you see a Pukeko feeding with its foot, please record:

1. which foot it is using
2. time and date
3. district in which the bird is feeding.

Please send the information to me at 69 Hornsey Road, Melrose, Wellington.

PETER REESE

Black Stilt breeding 94/95

It has been a better breeding season than average for wild Black Stilts last year. Five pure black and seven black x dark hybrid pairs were located nesting. Another five pairs were located but did not nest. The total population was 72 adults and 12 dark hybrids. 70 eggs were artificially incubated, 33 of which were hatched in captivity and 29 fledged. Eighteen artificially incubated eggs were returned to wild parents and seven chicks fledged. This is a considerable improvement in fledging success of around 40% (compared with 14%, equating to two wild chicks in 1993/94).

Ten of the 33 juveniles released from captivity in September 1993 were still alive one year later in the wild. Four of these were involved in breeding activity. Another thirty juveniles were released in September 1994. As at July 1995, there had been five of the 1993 and five of the 1994 released birds located alive. Others may also be alive but not yet relocated.

One adult black and three dark H hybrids were banded on the nest and five wild reared chicks were banded before fledging. Band combinations now involve two colours on each tarsus, with a total of four colour bands per bird. This brings the percentage of Black Stilts banded to approximately 80-85%.

Several dark hybrids have again been seen at Kawhia Harbour this winter and at least four full blacks seen in the Kaipara.

Any sightings should be sent to DoC Twizel Field Centre, Private Bag, Twizel, or to Adrian Riegen, 231 Forest Hill Road, Auckland 8, ph. (09) 814 9741, who will pass them on.

CHRISTINE REED

Courtesy of the *New Zealand Wader Study Group* newsletter No. 6

Banded Dotterel videos

During the 1994 season Project River Recovery staff have monitored eight Banded Dotterel nests on a river in the

MacKenzie Basin with two time lapse video cameras. Our aim was to get more information about nest predation and predator species of the Banded Dotterel and other wader species in our study area.

A lot of time and hard work went into the study: large and heavy batteries, and video tapes had to be replaced daily. At the end of the season we had only one predation event, during two successive nights. A cat found a Banded Dotterel nest with two eggs and a chick, with the male on the nest (at 2200h). It 'played' with the chick, but was more interested in the adult bird. It looked like the male Banded Dotterel was flying low over the cat and, with one well executed jump, the cat caught the bird in the air and walked away with it in its mouth. The cat returned to the nest after 35 minutes and finally left just before 2300h. The chick had survived the 'playing' of the cat, but died between 0300-0900h.

The following night the cat appeared immediately after sunset (2035h) and headed straight for the nest. Both Banded Dotterel eggs had survived 8.5 hours of exposure in the nest the previous night and hatched during the morning. The female dotterel was on the nest when the cat arrived. It flew away and the cat started 'playing' with the chicks. Again, it was more interested in the adult bird and left the nest after fifteen minutes without success. One chick did not survive the cat's 'play' (or died shortly after the cat left), but the second chick was brooded for the remainder of the night and left the nest the next morning with the female.

The adult dotterel was seen three weeks later with chick behaviour, indicating that the chick was still alive.

During the 1995 season we will continue the monitoring of Banded Dotterel nests. 83 tapes with 24 hours of observation each, have so far yielded information on what sex incubates, when and for how long, periods without incubation, change over, display etc.

In general the male takes over from the female just after dark and the female reappears during the first hours of daylight.



Banded Dotterel settling onto nest, Rakaia River mouth, October 1993.

Photo Tony Crocker

There are exceptions - for example I have seen a few cases of females incubating until midnight. However once the male takes over for his night shift, the female does not reappear until morning.

AALBERT REBERGEN

Courtesy of the *New Zealand Wader Study Group* newsletter No. 6

Banded Waders

Since 1991 Ron Nilsson and I have banded 64 South Island Pied Oystercatchers in eight study areas on the Ahuriri, Tekapo and Ohau Rivers with an individual colour combination of four bands on the tarsus. We have also banded Banded Dotterels and Wrybills in our study areas to monitor nest success.

While the study is not a population study, we would like to gather as much information as possible. Several people have sent in their SIPO observations via the Banding Office, and I would appreciate any more. These tell us where our birds go in winter and if they are still alive. For example, one bird banded as a chick has been seen every year on the Manukau Harbour but has not returned to the Ohau River, its natal area.

The first SIPO return to the MacKenzie Basin rivers in the first week of July, mainly to the deltas. This year they arrived to a white winter landscape. The first colour banded individuals arrived in the last week of July.

Last season we found a nest with two SIPO and two Spur-winged Plover eggs, incubated by the SIPO pair. Only the SIPO eggs hatched.

AALBERT REBERGEN

Courtesy of the *New Zealand Wader Study Group* newsletter No. 6

Mystery Bird # 21

Last issue's mystery bird shows a very large bill with a hook at the tip and small protruding nostrils on the side. This shows it to be a seabird (order *Procellariiformes*) and the massiveness of the bill suggests it is either an albatross or a giant petrel species. The two giant petrels are easily eliminated by the nostrils - these are huge tubes sitting on top of the bill in the giant petrels. That leaves ten albatross species or forms (at last count!) which occur regularly in New Zealand waters.

There are three important things to note when trying to identify albatrosses - the underwing (or upperwing in the 'great' albatrosses), the head and the bill. The glimpse of the underwing suggests there is only a narrow dark leading edge. The head is medium greyish, with a paler crown/forehead, while the bill is generally pale, with slightly darker sides. The grey

head rules out the two great albatrosses (Wandering and Royal), and Yellow-nosed and Black-browed, all of which have white heads. Likewise the dark head of the elegant Light-mantled Sooty Albatross eliminates it.

We can also use the pale bill to rule out the next two contenders, Buller's and Grey-headed, as these show contrasting dark and pale panels on the bill. This leaves the *cauta* trio, the "Shy" Mollymawk group. This is a group of three forms of large mollymawks, for which opinion is divided as to whether they should be treated as separate species, or as sub-species of *Diomedea cauta*. The first is the White-capped Mollymawk *D. c. cauta*, breeding in the New Zealand region on the Auckland Islands, the second is Salvin's (Grey-backed) Mollymawk *D. c. salvini*, breeding on the Snares Western Chain and the Bounty Islands, while the last is the Chatham Island Mollymawk *D. c. eremita*, a New Zealand endemic, breeding only on the Chatham Islands.

These forms show differences in plumage and bill colour between adults and juveniles, so identification is not entirely straightforward. We can eliminate *eremita* immediately, though, as it has a dark grey head without a pale cap. We can also rule out juvenile *salvini*. A feature on the bill which puts adult *cauta* out of contention is the dark maxillary unguis, the last segment of the lower mandible (underneath the hook of the upper mandible). This is pale in adult *cauta*. This leaves us with an adult *salvini* or a juvenile *cauta*.

There are some subtle differences between these two, with *salvini* having darker cheeks and sides to the bill than *cauta*, similar to those shown by our mystery bird. We can clinch the identification with one more feature - the nail itself (the "hook") is pale except for a small dark patch on the inner side. This is found only in Salvin's Mollymawk, juvenile White-capped having extensive dark markings on the outer side of the nail.

So our mystery bird is an adult Salvin's Mollymawk, which in addition to breeding in New Zealand, also breeds in small numbers in the Crozet Islands in the Indian Ocean.

PHIL BATTLETT



Mystery Bird # 22

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

Mystery Bird Quiz

We are now three quarters of the way through this year's quiz and Pictures J, K and L will complete the competition. Despite an attractive prize of a year's free subscription to the Society, entries have dropped away this year and so the competition will be put on hold for the time being. It was based on a somewhat similar competition in a British birding journal. With their larger readership they attracted many entries - admittedly for a very attractive prize. We might resurrect this quiz in a few years' time. Best of luck to those in the running for this year's prize.

A number of regular entrants have still to send me their guesses, but at the time of writing Pam Agnew is a clear leader, with all correct so far.

The identifications of G, H and I were:

G. Common Sandpiper. This bird was photographed from my car window on the coast of Bougainville Island.

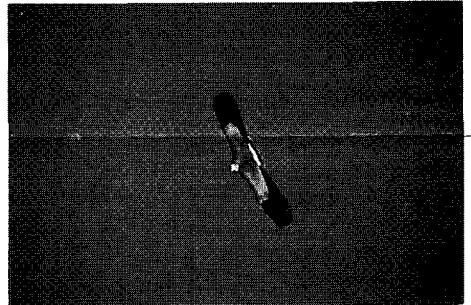
H New Zealand Pipit. Photographed at the Bromley Ponds in Christchurch.

I Antipodes Island Parakeet.

Send entries J, K and L to:

DON HADDEN
P.O. Box 6054
Christchurch 8030

J



K



L



Commuter Pigeons

Readers of the *New Scientist* in Britain have been writing to the journal recently about apparent deliberate commuting on London's Underground rail system. One wrote 'A pair of pigeons hopped onto the Circle Line at Aldgate, stayed by the door, and alighted with purpose at the next stop - Tower Hill. How did they know that the platform for Tower Hill was on the same side of the carriage as that for Aldgate?'

The purpose seems for travel, not food, with pigeons deliberately joining and leaving trains. Birds have been noted on the Northern and Piccadilly Lines, and serious scientific study of the habit has been suggested.

Courtesy of the *Daily Telegraph*.

Review

Hamlyn Bird Behaviour Guides - Waders, by N. Hammond and B. Pearson. Hamlyn Ltd, 1994, 174 pp. ISBN 0 600 57974 3 (hardback). £14.00. Available from Reed Book Services Ltd, P.O. Box 5, Rushden, Northants, NN10 6YX, U.K.

This beautifully illustrated book on waders is divided into six main chapters, dealing with movements, feeding, flocking and roosting, plumage and moult, comfort and behaviour and breeding. Each of these chapters is then divided into clearly headed sections, the chapter on movements as an example being split into migration, timing, navigation, journeys, heights of journeys, speed of flight etc. Some of these sections are fairly brief, leaving the reader wanting to know more, but all are full of interesting facts and figures. The style of writing is not too scientific, but the facts are up to date and accurate.

Although the book was written predominantly about the waders of Europe, much of what is written is very relevant to waders of the Australasian region.

The illustrations by Bruce Pearson are reason enough to add this book to one's library. On almost every page there is a delightful watercolour showing waders in natural settings or illustrating points about behaviour etc. that are mentioned in the text.

The final chapter is a gazetteer. This gives a brief description of 363 wader sites in the Western Palearctic and the waders that may be encountered there. These sites range from Lake Myvatn in Iceland to Eilat in Israel, and of course include the famous wader sites of The Wash in England, the Waddensee in the Netherlands and the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania.

For any birder developing an interest in waders, this is a very useful book, as it will answer most of the questions one is likely to ask.

ADRIAN REIGEN

Regional Round-up

Northland

The last three months have been a little less busy due to the late winter/spring weather, which has been wetter and cooler for longer, I feel. The four Kaka which have taken up residence in the Whau Valley/Kamo area since July are still with us so must be feeding successfully.

Passerine banding has continued under Ray Pierce's direction on suitable mornings, with a final total of 672 new bands (90% Silvereyes), plus 46 recaptures from the previous two years. Thirteen kilometres is still the greatest distance a Northland banded Silvereye has been found, which suggests that the birds are mobile within relatively small home ranges. It is hoped to begin banding earlier next year to contribute to the OSNZ Moulting Scheme.

Monthly meetings have continued as usual, and we enjoyed watching Adrian Reigen's video of the harbour reclamation project at Hakata Bay, Fukuoka, in August. In September Tony Beauchamp gave us food for thought with a talk on the Weka population decline in the Opotiki foothills, Kawau Island and Northland, and in October Murray Williams showed us beautiful slides of the Blue Duck on the Manganui-a-te-ao River.

The monthly beach patrols have yielded some interesting finds, especially in early October when we had a wreck of 58 White-headed Petrels on the west coast, and most exciting of all, an Antarctic Fulmar was found alive and in a reasonably lively condition. This was pure magic for the lucky patrollers who found it and took it to Barry Searle at Glink's Gully. Barry has nurtured and successfully released exhausted seabirds over many years.

A beach wrecked specimen found in October 1994 on the west coast has recently been confirmed as a Hawaiian Shearwater, a first record for New Zealand.

During September ten fortunate people were able to stay for two nights on Little Barrier Island, with fine sunny weather as a bonus. Little Barrier is now closed to overnight stays until new accommodation is built. We saw all of the bird species on the island except for the Kokako and Kakapo, and went out both nights with DoC personnel looking unsuccessfully for Giant Weta. Our planned birdwatching cruise out near the Hen and Chickens in October was cancelled due to the illness of the boat skipper.

We have reports that the trees we planted on Motukawanui Island are doing very well, and that one of the ten Brown Kiwi recently released there has laid an egg. Since she is a domestically reared bird her progress will be closely watched to see if she is able to cope.

On 18 and 19 November we have an aerial survey of the Northland region to locate gull and White-fronted Tern colonies, which will then be checked out by ground parties, so we have a busy time ahead.

(Lorna Simpkin)

Auckland

At the end of the September meeting, Terry Greene from DoC spoke on the birds observed on his recent trip to Darwin, Kakadu and Queensland. His slides illustrated the vastness of the areas and the great number of species of birds to be seen. Tony Mansfield spoke at our October meeting about the predatory birds of Central Africa where he was a resident for seven years. His slides were excellent and the photos of eagles and vultures superb.

Leighton's Farm, Kaipara Harbour, in September produced 31 species of birds, including a bittern and three NZ Dabchicks. Male Australasian Shovellers were in magnificent plumage, whilst one male was unusual in being very pale.

Also in September we visited John Kendrick at his home to see his sound recording systems. The many facets of recording sounds were explained to us. John has receivers in several locations on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, and he is able to listen to the birds in particular areas while sitting in his armchair at home. We then visited Shakespear Regional Park to be shown how recordings are made in the field. On this occasion, Tuis in a flowering Kowhai were the subjects. The day proved most interesting, with all of us realising that bird sound recording is a highly challenging technical field in which John would have very few peers.

Again in September, fifteen members visited Motuora Island in superb weather. The object was to observe recently released Shore Plover and confirm Grey-faced Petrel nesting areas. Four Shore Plover were seen feeding on a rocky plateau near the water's edge and looked to be very much at home. However some of the other released birds have 'migrated' to other islands and the mainland. A look-out is being kept on eastern beaches from Mangawhai in the north to Orewa in the south. The Kaipara Harbour, on the west coast, is also being monitored. Three birds have been seen on the southern end of Orewa Beach and are causing interest to regular beach-walking residents.

Grey-faced Petrel burrows totalled 126, of which 70 showed signs of recent bird activity.

Highlights of the Labour Weekend trip, lead by Mike Graham, to Pureora State Forest were the sighting of a Kokako and a New Zealand Falcon. Other bush birds were observed despite indifferent weather conditions.

Muriwai in late August produced 83 birds and fourteen species - a most rewarding time for those involved. Josie Driksen picked up an Antarctic Petrel at South Muriwai in September. Mike Graham picked up thirteen birds of eight species, including a Westland Petrel. Beach patrolling on our west coast beaches this year is certainly producing a wider range of species than in previous recent years.

Gwenda Pulham recorded 28 Cattle Egrets at Haranui, Kaipara Harbour on 12 August, plus six Black Stilts - four adults and two immatures at Hedley's Farm. A Glossy Ibis was sighted by Mel Galbraith at the Mangawhai Estuary on 23 September, as well as two Cattle Egrets. Doug Booth followed up a report of a Cape Barren Goose at Parakai and, sure enough, the bird was seen at a dam in the company of Mallards. Did it fly across the Tasman or escape from captivity? Probably the latter, and this is being investigated.

Royal Spoonbills at the Mangere Sewage Ponds on 12 October numbered 33. Gwenda Pulham reported two pairs of Black-billed Gulls nesting on Shell Island, Tapora North, on 15 October but by 28 October the tide had washed over the nests. The finding appears to be the most northerly nesting record.

On 28 October 27 Cattle Egrets were reported near Helensville, and from previous records this is the latest that they have been recorded from the area. Gannets, Caspian Terns and Black-backed Gulls appear to be nesting much later than they did last year. Whimbrels totalling thirteen were seen at Jordan's Farm, Kaipara Harbour on 22 October.

A Rook was reported from Little Barrier Island - has anyone in Auckland lost a pet Rook?

(Kay Haslett/Doug Booth)

South Auckland

Kidd's Farm at Karaka, on the Manukau Harbour, once again lived up to its reputation as a wader mecca, especially after a visit made there on 8 October by Gwenda Pulham and Nick Green. Huge numbers of waders had obviously returned and were found roosting in the paddocks during high tide. Among the astonishing numbers recorded were 2000 Lesser Knots, 5000 Bar-tailed Godwits (seen literally arriving from migration on 13 September by Tony Habraken), 10 Red-necked Stints, 200 Turnstones, one or possibly two Large Sand Dotterrels, 17 Far-eastern Curlews and 70 Curlew Sandpipers. Nick commented that with totals like this it reminded him of the legendary Mai Po Marshes in Hong Kong.

Unfortunately the numbers had dropped dramatically during subsequent visits, including one made by Pam and Des Agnew and myself just six days later, when

we saw only twenty Curlew Sandpipers, one curlew and no Large Sand Dotterrels. There were however additions in the form of a Siberian Tattler and two Marsh Sandpipers.

Other notable records from Kidd's include five Little Terns, ten adult New Zealand Dotterrels with two well grown young on 14 October, and evidence that the 98 Black-billed Gulls present in the colony are indeed nesting again.

As usual our monthly beach patrols along Kariotahe Beach have resulted in some interesting finds. In October a total of seventy birds of fifteen species were found, including eight Sooty Shearwaters, four Buller's Shearwaters, a high figure of thirteen White-headed Petrels and our first Antarctic Fulmar in five years. A second Antarctic Fulmar was picked up on 5 November.

One of the fourteen gannets found during October was wearing a metal band which fortunately was spotted by Tom Barton. After removal it was sent to Wellington, and it transpired that it was banded by I. A. Nicholson at Muriwai on 14 November 1982.

Other miscellaneous reports from our region are many and varied, such as the 86 Cattle Egrets at Aka Aka which were accompanied by 62 Spur-winged Plovers.

A single, apparently healthy, Bar-tailed Godwit which was spotted standing in a wet paddock in the centre of Matamata on 27 October was certainly a good distance from the species' preferred habitat.

There have also been several sightings of Kaka in the Hill Park area of Manurewa - an excellent record for our region. One individual was seen flying over the southern motorway from the direction of the Botanical Gardens on 13 August. Another Kaka was seen eating *Camellia* buds in Ramarama on 29 July.

Two early records of calling Shining Cuckoos came from Waimarama and Awahitu on 23 and 27 September respectively. The two Marsh Sandpipers and the Siberian Tattler at the Mangere Oxidation Ponds on 3 November may well have been the same as the Kidd's birds on 14 November. Lastly I was interested to watch young Black-billed Gulls, banded from the Karaka colony last year, engaging in kleptoparasitic behaviour with White-fronted Terns at Miranda recently. Terns carrying small fish were chased and harassed, skua fashion, for several seconds at a time but never surrendered their catches.

A change from birds at our August meeting when Sue Moore gave us an interesting talk and slide show on New Zealand's two native bats. Like so many of our natives, these two species are severely endangered and full marks should go to all those attempting to save them.

For September's meeting, Hugh

Clifford updated us on his and other Waikato members' work on Grey-faced Petrel colonies in the Mt Maunganui area. The huge amounts of data gained reflected the many dedicated hours spent in the field, often in less than favourable conditions.

Finally, during our most recent meeting, Mike Graham showed us a sample of the commoner birds to be found in Zimbabwe. Mike, who lived there, assured us that the birding in that part of Africa is top class, and, judging from the excellent photos of numerous exotic species, we believe him!

(Paul Harrison)

Waikato

We seem to be catering more and more for "armchair ornithologists" in the Waikato, with very small numbers attending field surveys, but increased numbers at evening meetings. Perhaps the unseasonably cold, wet weather is to blame, or it could be that our evening meeting speakers are of such a high standard that these are on members' 'not to be missed' lists.

Hugh Clifford entertained and enlightened us all with his humorous commentary and breathtaking slides of subantarctic scenery on calm days, as well as 12 metre seas. Hugh's close-ups of seabirds and penguins showed what compelled him to undertake this, his third, journey to the region.

John Innes and Martin Day told us about a little known bird, the New Zealand Dabchick. Their research over more than ten years shows that this is another species that is in decline, for reasons that are not quite clear. Nests are vulnerable to wind and wave action, but predators may also take their toll. We are pleased to note that this bird has been chosen an MSc degree subject by a Waikato student.

Ralph Powlesland's excellent presentation on his Black Shag study showed members just how much can be learnt from frequent observation. How could anyone think that the Black Shag was "boring" after hearing Ralph divulge the secrets of its private life?

Our Cattle Egret count of 105 birds at Rangiriri was the lowest recorded since 1982, when 82 birds were seen. This low count coincides with extremely dry weather in parts of eastern Australia during the past breeding season, where some previously favoured nesting areas were completely devoid of water, and no breeding occurred in them.

Beach patrols have thrown up an interesting collection of bodies. Prion wrecks can often only be recorded as "sp.", because frequently all we find is a pair of wings, the rest of the carcass having been stripped completely. Cats and Black-

backed Gulls are the suspected offenders, with the tracks of the former frequently found, and numbers of the latter usually present on most beaches. Cape Pigeons, White-headed Petrels and Kerguelen Petrels have been frequent finds, as have unusually high numbers of gannets.

Live bird sightings include a Kaka at Kihikihi, a NZ Falcon at Karapiro, a Bellbird at Ngaruawahia, two Sulphur-crested Cockatoos at Marakopa and a White Heron at Lake Whangape. Persistent reports of unusual green parrots continue to be received from various parts of the Waikato, but sightings have yet to be made by anyone who can identify them with certainty.

(Bev Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

On 15 September, a good friend phoned to tell me he had two Kookaburras in his large garden about two kilometres south of Opotiki. While not an ornithologist, John Hedley is no fool, and watched the birds with his wife and another person for about twenty minutes, and I have no doubt about their identity. Rosemary Heather and Malcolm Hutton met John a few days later and concurred with his identification. There had been strong northerly gales prior to this.

On 23 September I had a Kerguelen Petrel brought to me. Quite lively at first, it died about three hours later. It was found about 15 km from the sea.

I took Brian Chudleigh up to the Takaputahi area a couple of months ago and he got some super photos of Blue Duck. We also saw several Weka in that area where they have re-established themselves - this is surely good news.

(Bill Sloan)

Gisborne/Wairoa

A survey of New Zealand Dotterels along the east coast, from near East Cape south to Mahia Peninsula, was carried out by a mixed flock of OSNZ and Forest & Bird members and DoC officers. The Gisborne to East Cape section was surveyed on 16-17 September.

A team from Hawkes Bay plus Rosemary Heather from Wellington met us at Muriwai on the Saturday morning. Small groups moved steadily north, checking out the beaches as far as Tokomaru Bay.

A good start was a bird, colour-banded last year as a chick, on the Muriwai Spit. Four were recorded in the Muriwai area, another four at Pouawa, just north of Gisborne, none at the expected areas of Waihau and Tolaga Bay, but a group of seven at Nuhiti. By late afternoon everyone had arrived at the Te Araroa pub, a very convenient meeting spot.

On Sunday we headed back south, checking back to Tokomaru Bay. There were only two more definite additions, both at Te Araroa beach.

A later check drew a blank at the usual sites of Oraka and Ononui but three birds on Portland Island.

A total of 21 positive sightings has doubled any previous surveys. Follow up work will be carried out as the season progresses, when birds are expected to disperse onto the favoured beaches.

A bonus while travelling through Gisborne was an excellent close-up of our Northern Shoveller on a large pond at the Waikanae playground. Sandy Bull later reported the bird in the company of a Mallard female and twelve juveniles at Awapuni Lagoon. There was no colour on the juveniles to suggest that the Northern Shoveller was the sire, but he was certainly acting in a very protective way. They will be watched with interest.

(Geoff Foreman)

Taranaki

About a dozen Silvereyes were observed eating aphids off buttercup leaves in a farm paddock. On another farm a Blackbird with white markings has been seen. These tend to pop up now and again around the place, so this is not our first record of 'Pied' Blackbirds. 86 Goldfinches were seen on the hatchery lawn of New Plymouth's Pukekura Park.

From Ngamotu Beach in New Plymouth city our Sugar Loaf Island Starlings were watched flying to their roost at dusk. An almost continuous stream, estimated at ten birds wide, were flying over the beach for ten minutes, still continuing when the observer left. Several years ago the Starling population on the islands was estimated at 50,000.

Our two Rooks are still with us and have been seen by three of our members over the past few months, and a pair of falcons were observed at Omoana again.

(Erika Woodger)

Hawkes Bay

In August we visited Lake Roto-o-kiwa. Bordered by a railway line along one side, the lake is a good wintering spot for NZ Dabchicks. Ten were seen, as well as Black Swans, Mallards, two Grey Ducks and Little Shags.

Mid September saw seven members travelling to Gisborne to assist the Department of Conservation with a New Zealand Dotterel survey on the coast from Muriwai to East Cape and Hicks Bay.

Our October field trip was to Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre in the Wairarapa. Colin Scadden turned on the fine weather and treated us to a comprehensive tour of the

centre which included a visit to the Shore Plover and Campbell Island Teal enclosures. Saddleback, Stitchbird, Kokako and Takahe enclosures were also visited. Thanks to Colin, a very informative and enjoyable visit.

A shortage of helpers, to assist the local Department of Conservation in mid October with a survey of the Tukituki River, meant that some of the stretches were quite long for the nine members who took part. Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels were the predominant species, with Pied Stilts and all other wading and water birds being counted.

November looks like a busy month with the national tern and gull survey. We also plan to continue with our summer and winter wader counts, though they have been discontinued on a national basis.

Sightings of interest in the region over the past few months include a White-winged Black Tern over the Westshore Lagoon. A large flock of Spotted Shags (100 plus) were seen on and around the sewer outfall at East Clive. Waders are beginning to arrive back at the estuary, with 236 godwits, two knots and 12 golden plover seen at Ahuriri at the end of October.

(Christine McRae)

Manawatu

We have had two well attended meetings since August. Andrea Booth, a MSc student in the Department of Ecology at Massey University, gave us an illustrated talk about her project monitoring Little Shearwaters on Lady Alice Island in the Hen and Chickens group. Phil Bartley, also a student at Massey, had the good fortune to be included in an expedition to the Arctic tundra. He evidently had a marvellous time, and his enthusiasm when describing the nesting waders was evident in his talk.

Members have completed several beach patrols during the last three months. On 17 September we were lucky to have a Canadian wildlife veterinarian with us when four gannets were found between Himatangi and Waiterere. Gary Wobeser did a quick post mortem and in his opinion they all died of starvation.

The Manawatu Estuary at Foxton has been regularly visited since the waders began returning from Alaska and Siberia. By 22 October there were 383 Bar-tailed Godwits, 87 Lesser Knots and 10 Pacific Golden Plovers - almost identical to the figures for 1994. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a Red-necked Stint have already been seen amongst the wader flock. If anyone is planning a visit to the estuary and cannot find the golden plover flock at high tide, they sometimes roost downstream of the boating club in a patch of *Salicornia* and blend into the background very well.

We are all looking forward to your registration for next year's AGM after you receive your March issue of *Notornis* and *OSNZ News*.

(Pam Slack)

Nelson

I see the task of Regional Representative as being one of encouraging the study of birds at a local level. In the past few months I have found, as Jenny Hawkins warned, that while you can launch a bird into a breeze you can't make it flap. Nevertheless, despite a high proportion of less active members, the region is functioning on a number of fronts for those who are involved. A newsletter in early spring outlined a number of options for bird study on an individual basis, as part of regional projects or with nationally organised schemes. Most of these are under way to some extent.

Several members have continued the study of gannets nesting on Farewell Spit - a joint project with Landcare Research. The colony is well established this year and looks likely to make up for last year's disastrous washouts. A study of Blue Penguins on Fisherman Island, off the Abel Tasman coast, is providing opportunities for more members to become involved in a 'hands on' study. Accessible burrows were harder to find than expected but should be sufficient to draw comparisons with others on the mainland. Signs have been erected near the Caspian Tern colony in Waimea Estuary in an attempt to prevent the usual accidental disturbance. All is going well, with chicks due for banding in mid November.

Plans are underway to find and monitor every Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern colony this season. A combined effort with Marlborough members and Department of Conservation staff will be centred on St Arnaud to ensure full coverage of upper Wairau and Buller catchments. The tern colonies should be a little easier to locate, except for the outer Sounds, where the number of visits will be limited by the remoteness.

Later in the season, with breeding colonies out of the way, the intention is to put a concerted effort into finding out more about the elusive Spotless Crake and Marsh Crake. Little is known of either species in this region, yet they continue to turn up in a surprising range of locations.

(Peter Gaze)

Canterbury

There is not a lot to report this spring, though we have our migratory waders back which is always exciting. There were two 'Commie' (probably Common) Terns on the Ashley Estuary in August, and a possible Hoary-headed Grebe on Lake

Forsyth - just too far away to get a positive identification. A Black Stilt made a short stay in the city environs at Travis Swamp and our Australian Little Grebe put in its annual appearance at Taranaki Creek, Waikuku. A pair of these grebes are again breeding beside State Highway 1 just south of Ashburton.

A Morepork was heard calling all night in the Kaituna Valley - they are rare on Banks Peninsula - and there were still four Great Crested Grebes on Lake Forsyth in mid October. 47 Turnstones arrived at Lake Ellesmere but did not stay long, as did a Black-tailed Godwit. We have received confirmation of our second Little Stint record for Lake Ellesmere.

In August Peter Dilks from DoC addressed our evening meeting with an account of trips to the subantarctic Campbell and Auckland Islands. He glued transmitters to the down feathers of albatrosses, which only stay on for a few weeks, but was able to monitor where the birds feed. Males and females go to different areas, which is of considerable help in determining whether tuna long lines are responsible for the demise of so many of them.

September's meeting consisted of a workshop, with bird tracking demonstrations, recording equipment and a lesson in photography. In October we were entertained by Andrew Crossland and his accounts of his overseas birding experiences in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Britain. He encountered other New Zealanders in the most out of the way places.

Our SIPO/Variable Oystercatcher hybridising pairs have nested again. One pair has two well grown chicks, one of which is now carrying a green flag on the left leg. We propose to monitor these birds over the next few years.

NZ Scaup have been seen on Victoria Lake in the Botanical Gardens for the first time, and two of three Cape Barren Geese, frequently seen from the northern motorway out of Christchurch in recent years, have produced three goslings.

(Sheila Petch)

Otago

The Mohua survey of the Waikaia Forest was a great success. Rain, snow, brilliant sunshine... you name it, we came across it. Good company, good food and plenty of birds. We would have liked to have found more Yellowheads though.

The Otago Passerine Banding Group has been busy this winter. An unbelievable 2898 Silvereyes have been banded, of which 2357 were colour banded. Last year we managed to colour band 500. All in aid of determining the dispersal of these Silvereyes after winter. So far we have very few answers. A few have been seen 10 to 40 km from the banding stations, one sighting 48 km from Dunedin and a promising one, banded in Milton, sighted 115 km in a north-westerly direction in Hampden. It might indicate a tendency for Silvereyes to move north after the winter. We would like to thank the Ministry for the Environment for their support in this project.

In October we have again been involved in the Yellow-eyed Penguin census on the Otago Peninsula. The overall impression is that there is an abundance of food about; consequently birds are in very good health and, more importantly, a large number of juveniles have survived the winter. The tentative figures, just released, are 295 pairs on the Otago Peninsula and 151 in the Catlins.

The Otago region has just published their Dunedin Mapping Scheme, called 'The Distribution of Birds in Dunedin', edited by Bruce McKinlay. Copies can be purchased by OSNZ members from the Otago RR at a cost of \$6.00 per copy.

Beach patrols are never very rewarding in Otago, but the two Blue Petrels found in September and October on beaches of the Otago Peninsula are worth noting.

(Peter Schweigman)

DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH ISSUE IS 10 FEBRUARY