

No.80 **September 1996**

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

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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.

OSNZ News

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1996 AGM and Conference - Foxton Beach 30 May - 3 June

This year's gathering was a little later than usual, due to changes in the school year, but still attracted a fine assortment from all corners of the land. Council members started off proceedings on Thursday afternoon, RRs arrived on Friday afternoon for their meeting and by late afternoon the locals had prepared the Boys' Brigade hall for the next arrivals. A brisk southerly had now set in, dragging temperatures down to low levels which set the scene for the remainder of the weekend.

On Saturday the hall was crammed with 122 registered members. We were welcomed by Roger Slack and Phil Battley introduced the speakers for Scientific Day.

Professor David Lambert of Massey University opened with an enlightening presentation on "Sex, Birds and DNA". A simple birds and bees, educational sort of talk this was not. The complex methods and processes for treating samples of blood and feathers for DNA analysis were explained as well as how the results are interpreted. Though very technical at times, the uneducated amongst us were still able to grasp the content and how it is used in research. We were then shown, by way of example, the complex family arrangements of Southern Skuas and Pukeko using DNA - not only who were males and females but also who were the fathers and mothers of the eggs hatched. It is clear that all is not as it appears on the surface or simple either. This was a fascinating insight into one of the finer points of science and how it can benefit bird study.

Colin Miskelly (DoC Wellington) presented "The impacts of human visitors on forest birds on Kapiti Island". Using data collected by OSNZ members during 1983/84 when two walking tracks were in use, six species were identified

which used the track systems in different ways. In 1990 the McKenzie Track was closed and the Wilkinson Track opened. Counts during 1991-93 were used for comparison with the Trig Track which remained open in order to determine the effect of the closure of the McKenzie Track. In 1993 visitor permits were increased from 150 to 250 per week while the maximum permitted on the island remained at 50. During 1993 to the present the counts have continued, and though not complete the study has proved so far to be very interesting.

Mike Graham reflected on the "Tiritiri Matangi Island field survey: 10 years' results". Since 1984 over 200,000 plants have been planted which have transformed the grazed landscape into many islands of dense green foliage. Before and after aerial photographs clearly

showed the success of the programme. OSNZ Auckland has monitored the changes in the populations and species found, and fostered the development of new and young members of the Society, by organising regular field trips to conduct counts on transects passing through many habitats on the island. The eradication of kiore and the introduction of species such as Saddleback, Whitehead, NZ Robin and Stitchbird, as well as star turns such as Takahe, has added a new dimension to the island and their progress is eagerly awaited in years to come. When will the first Long-tailed Cuckoo arrive?

Mel Galbreath outlined the success of a school science project involving the "Translocation of Stitchbirds to Tiritiri Matangi Island". The transfer, carried out by DoC in partnership with students and



Conference participants at the Manawatu Estuary 2 June 1996.
Photo: David Medway.

staff from Glenfield College, took place in September 1995, with 37 birds from Little Barrier Island. Students learned about all aspects involved in a transfer - handling birds, trapping, care of captives, release, design and building of roost boxes, gaining valuable hands-on experience in the process, and equally valuable publicity and community awareness of the project. Hopefully the students will be able to follow progress of the birds in the years to come.

Hugh Robertson's presentation on the "Recovery of the Kakerori (Rarotongan Flycatcher)" showed how vulnerable some species are to predation by introduced *Rattus rattus*. The population of this small flycatcher was down to as low as 29 birds, and with the help of New Zealand scientists, Cook Islands conservation services and volunteers from both countries there is now a minimum of 105 birds in 1995. Poisoning of rats and collaring of trees to prevent nest predation have paid off enormously and the continuation of such management will ensure the continued survival of the species.

Frances Schmechel spoke of the "Biology and conservation of the Chatham Island Oystercatcher". Working on a three year study looking into habitat use, breeding success and territoriality, the population of this, the world's rarest oystercatcher, is estimated at around 100 pairs breeding on five islands in the Chathams (Mangere, Rangatira, main Chatham, Pitt and Star Keys). Her work is centred around 15 pairs on the northern side of the main island. The diversity of habitat used by these pairs is producing some interesting information and will hopefully help the species maintain or improve its current status.

Gwenda Pulham, the fairy godmother of the rare New Zealand Fairy Tern gave us an informative and entertaining talk on "Seasonal plumage changes in the New Zealand Fairy Tern", which can be easily confused with the migratory Little Tern which frequents our shores during late spring to early autumn and occasionally overwinters in northern harbours. The population numbers only around 30 birds and breeds only at a few selected sites. The value of keeping detailed field notes was highlighted as Gwenda was able to access unpublished notes of Murray Munroe and compare them with her own observations. Her ability to mimic both Little and Fairy Tern flight habit earned her the title "Scary Tern" - an original concept not attempted by other speakers on the day.

Adrian Riegen summarised "Results of some migratory wader studies from the Auckland region" and after his opening comments we suspect he's a twitcher. The New Zealand Wader Study Group has collected information and banded thousands of birds to date and is slowly beginning to learn about the complexities of migration. The East Asian-Aus-

tralasian flyway is now well recognised with many colour-flagged birds from New Zealand and Australia reported from along the route extending to Japan, East Russia and Alaska. Bar-tailed Godwits, colour-banded in Alaska, have been seen in New Zealand. Cooperation with other countries along the flyway will help better understanding of movements, and protection of key habitat sites will ensure the birds continued safe passage in the future.

Andrea Booth highlighted the effects of "Predation by kiore on Little Shearwater eggs" on Lady Alice Island in the Hen and Chickens group. Predation by kiore was the suspected cause of the failure of 38% of nests monitored. Video footage showed how effective kiore are at preying on this species' eggs by rolling them out of the nest chamber. When a shearwater's egg was substituted with a hen egg, the kiore coped equally well, and while it couldn't remove the egg from the chamber the end result was another satisfied kiore.

Hugh Clifford presented "Results from five years' study of Grey-faced Petrels by OSNZ Waikato" from their regularly visited sites at Mount Maunganui and nearby, predator-free Motuotau Island. Breeding success, predation and interaction between the two populations were discussed and compared. Where burrow occupancy was 15-21% higher on Motuotau, chicks lost at the Mount Maunganui site was 74-79%. When a rat control programme was instigated at this site losses dropped to 17%. From their banding programme movements of birds between the two sites and Whale Island (70 kms away) is providing more interesting data.

To prevent the unlikely event of any weary souls nodding off during the presentations, balloons had been strategically placed around the hall, timed to explode at given intervals. The bitter southerly entering through gaps in the walls was

overshadowed completely however by Mother Nature deciding to outdo herself with, at 1131 hours, what many of us thought was an express train rolling through Foxton. As the rumbling grew louder and someone remarked "Don't worry, it's only an earthquake", the building began to shake, shudder and roll. Scuffling of chairs in the rear emphasised the fear of those who sat upon them, while Mel Galbreath, speaking at the time, paused for a few seconds before continuing - the experience of a teacher I suppose. For the record, it was 5.4 on the Richter scale and centred 20 km south of Foxton some 35 km deep. The irony of this was that the fire risk and safety procedure talk by Mike Graham didn't cover "in the event of an earthquake". I wonder what we'll get next year.

The speaker's prize for the day of \$40 went to Hugh Clifford - well done Hugh!

The final hour of the day's programme was devoted to beach patrols and seabird identification (the world's second most interesting group of birds, according to MC Phil Battley) with Graeme Taylor and Alan Tennyson using museum specimens to guide us through some finer points, covering big mollymawks through to petrels, shearwaters and prions.

After a social hour and dinner we sat down for the AGM which went very well, a reflection of the enormous task of the Constitutional Review Committee.

Sunday morning we awoke to see the nearby Tararua Ranges and foothills covered in fresh snow - the locals insisted that the temperatures were the coldest they had ever known! The Kapiti Island field trip had to be cancelled because of the impossibility of crossing to the island, so a substitution was arranged at short notice to the nearby Manawatu Estuary and over the hills to Mt Bruce.



"Obedient South Auckland and Waikato AGM participants, after doing as the sign says and getting off the bus!"
Photo: Paul Cuming

A late morning stop at the Manawatu Gorge produced a few Silvereyes frantically feeding to keep warm and the odd Kereru flying about. As we continued toward Mt Bruce however it was clear that disorientation and hypothermia were taking their toll, with sightings of Ibisbill, avocet, dipper and Goosander from the coach, plus some remarkable Rook/Catle Egret hybrids.

At the Mt Bruce DoC centre a leisurely walk along the meandering pathways set in native bush led us past the aviaries of various species in the breeding programme, including Saddlebacks, Stitchbirds, Kaka and a pair of Kokako with their flying juveniles. From the state of their aviary young Kaka demonstrated how effective they are at tree pruning, and being letter box educated, their imminent release with transmitters clearly meant postie beware! "Jack" the Tui had plenty to say, but an odd *Ardea novaehollandiae whimbrelata* had nothing to say, probably being more red-faced than white-faced.

The remaining members had an enjoyable day in the Rangitikei/Wanganui area, visiting Bushy Park and on to the Turakina Valley to see the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, the Basin Reserve and Virginia Lake. We reconvened at Foxton for a superb mid-year Christmas dinner, with all the trimmings. Indeed the terrific and professional catering of the weekend was one of its undoubted highlights.

Monday dawned brilliantly clear, and while some set off to patrol Foxton beach - where few birds were located among the piles of driftwood cast up by the weather of the previous few days - others packed and wended their way homewards.

This enjoyable and highly successful conference was due in no small measure to the organisational abilities of Roger and Pam Slack, Jennifer Wasley, Sybil Cresswell and Phil Battley with their band of helpers. Many thanks to you all for undertaking the task and entertaining and putting up with the annual migration this year.

TONY HABRAKEN

New Mentor Scheme

There are two main reasons for the establishment of a mentor scheme. Firstly, there have been requests from some members for more "readable" articles and papers in OSNZ's publications. Secondly, there are many observations and studies carried out by individuals and groups that remain in notebooks and folders. It seems that, in many cases, the members responsible have been unable to write up their observations to the standard of either OSNZ publication.

To try and overcome these problems, I suggested to Council that a mentor

scheme be set up with the objective of encouraging and assisting members to write up the results of studies (personal, group, regional or national) so that information becomes available by being published. Of course, the councillors took me up on this suggestion, so I then had to determine whether it was a "goer". I am pleased to report that we now have twenty members distributed throughout the country who are willing to act as mentors.

Although mentors are willing to provide advice on planning and carrying out a study, their main activity will be to promote the publication of results, such as an article on *OSNZ News* or a short note or paper in *Notornis*. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, depending on the assistance required. Some members may want **advice** at some or all stages on how to analyse results and write up, others may require **assistance** with the various stages, while in the third case a member may want a mentor to take **full responsibility** for the entire write-up. In each case there are mentors willing to provide such a service.

Therefore, if you require assistance with planning, carrying out or writing up a study, or putting an observation into words, the procedure is to write to me, Mentor Scheme, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, detailing the assistance required. Every effort will be made to put you into contact with a mentor prepared to provide that assistance.

On the other hand, if you would like to be a mentor but have not been contacted, please write to me detailing the assistance you are prepared to provide.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Mentor Scheme Convenor

Kaipara Field Study Course 4-11 January 1997

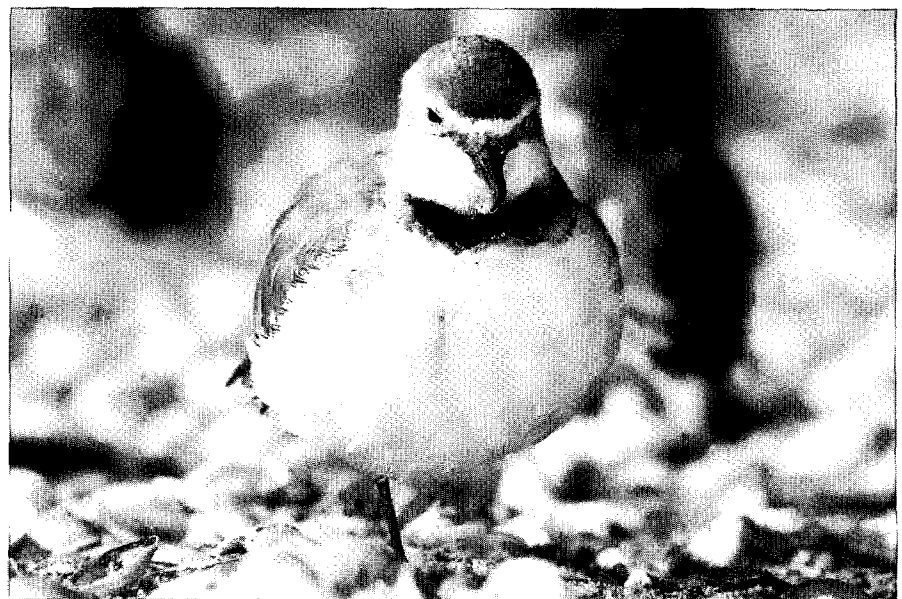
Many thanks, from the organising group, to all those members who have already put pen to paper and registered for the Kaipara Field Study Course. It is really helpful to be getting such a clear indication of interest in the proposed programme.

The popular options for daily activities and post course trips are filling up fast. There is no deadline for registration and nobody will be turned away, but late registration will mean that your choices are limited and really late registration may mean that you have no choice at all. Anyone wishing to participate, but not "live in" at the base camp, will need to register also as the final, detailed programme and other essential information about the course will only be available to those who are registered.

To date, wader watching and tern banding are the two most popular of the activities offered. This doesn't surprise me, as I can fully understand everyone being partial to terns and it is not hard to imagine why Wellingtonians are opting to feast their eyes on Arctic migrants. Dotterel catching, passerine netting and the harbour survey are much sought after also. Because of inquiries, a new activity, sketching birds in the field, has been added to the list, and, with several families already attending, a mystery Nature Adventure Day for youngsters is planned. A professional outdoor instructor will lead this day.

In the event of bad weather causing the post course trips to be postponed until Sunday 12 January, cheap overnight accommodation and travel back to Auckland is being arranged.

Please don't overlook the generous offer from the Miranda Naturalists' Trust for OSNZ members travelling to the



"Working with waders is one of the options on the Kaipara Field Study course".
Photo: Paul Harrison

Kaipara, to stop over at their centre before or after the course at Trust membership rates. Make your bookings with Keith Woodley on (09) 232 2781.

Give me a call on (09) 480 5535 (evenings) if there is anything more than you need to know.

GWENDA PULHAM

The Society is grateful for the donation to the Field Study Course of \$250.00 from BP Oil Ltd.

Gull and Tern survey - 1995

As can be seen from the tables of results (published in the June *OSNZ News*), all regions took part in the survey and only Wanganui was bereft of both species. If any members have information for 1995/96 colonies not recorded on the table (locations of colonies, even if no count of nests was made) would they please pass it on to RRs or send it to me.

Although some regions reported a few problems in carrying out the survey, for a first effort the coverage is pleasing. I wish to thank all those who took part for their efforts, especially those who organised the regional surveys. Several reports included the comment that having had the experience of organising members to find colonies and then counting/estimating the number of nesting pairs present, that the task could be carried out better another time.

The value of the information is marginal on its own. Only when it is compared with previous and/or future results will its true significance be evident. Since no previous national survey of these two species during the nesting season has been carried out, comparisons with previous counts will have to be related to particular colonies, colonies along a particular river, or colonies of a region. I have not yet searched for records of previous colony counts but will do so in due course. If anyone has any such information, I'm keen to receive it before writing up the first survey for *Notornis*. Comments from Lloyd Esler suggest that there has been a decline in the number of Black-billed Gulls since a Southland survey of the species was carried out in 1985.

The total of just 4653 White-fronted Tern pairs found nesting in 1995-96 seems very low. No doubt some colonies were not located on offshore islands. Several regions considered the 1995-96 nesting season for the species, compared with results seen in recent years, was very poor.

The most meaningful way of determining whether the 1995-96 results reflect the number of adults pairs present for each species would be to repeat the survey. The Council discussed the results and is keen to see the survey repeated in 1996-97 and possibly also in

1997-98. A repeat survey depends on the willingness of members to organise and carry it out. If it is evident that members are keen to repeat the survey (and from initial discussions with some RRs at the AGM it seems there would be good support), then Council has agreed to make every effort to provide the funding for the field work.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Convenor - National Gull and Tern Survey

Reminder
Subscriptions for 1997 are
now due



Marlborough Royal Spoonbills

The first Royal Spoonbill chick was banded at the Wairau Lagoon, near Blenheim, in November 1989. On 3 May 1991 this bird was sighted in the Far North by Richard Parrish. It has since been sighted 11 times; at Dunedin, Farewell Spit, Auckland and Kawhia Harbour. The last recorded sighting was on 3 October 1995, again by Richard Parrish at Rangaunu Harbour in the Far North. I wonder where it is now.

To date a total of 76 spoonbill chicks has been individually colour banded at the Wairau Lagoons, and 40 of these have been sighted since. The big day to band is 6 February, although we have banded at other times.

Date	No. birds banded	Individuals sighted
Nov 89	1	1
Feb 91	11	9
Feb 92	7	7
Feb 93	24	15
Feb 94	-	-
Feb 95	20	7
Feb 96	13	1
Total	76	40

Most have been sighted more than once. Ray Clough in Auckland has sighted one particular bird 41 times over a two month period at the same location. That was back in August 1994 - where is it now?

Another interesting bird is one banded on 6 February 1991. Three months later it was in the Far North.

2/5/91	Waitaki Landing, Far North
25/10/91	Waikanae Estuary, Wellington
8/11/92	Mangere Sewage Ponds, Auckland
27/11/92	Ashley River, Canterbury
6/11/93	Kaikorai Estuary, Otago
7/11/93	Clutha Lagoon, Otago
16/12/93	Maukiekie Island, Otago
13/1/94	Maukiekie Island, Otago
6 & 8/3/94	near Oamaru
14 & 16/4/94	Waikouaiti, Otago
12/5/94	Hawkesbury Lagoon, Otago
20-29/5/94	Mangere Sewage Ponds, Auckland

The two sightings in November 1992 and again in May 1994 are very interesting. Two other birds banded on the same day were sighted in Nelson in May and a third bird turned up in the Bay of Plenty in May. Where are they all now?

Generally speaking, the birds drift north for the winter. Which way they go is a bit confusing as birds have turned up in Nelson, Farewell Spit, Waikanae Estuary, Manawatu Estuary, Taranaki, Kawhia Harbour, Waikato delta, as well as Lake Wairarapa, Miranda and even west Taupo, but all seem to spend some time in Auckland. Ray Clough did a wonderful job recording birds at the Mangere Sewage Ponds. Unfortunately I think this roost is no longer used. Again, I wonder where they go now?

The rest of the year they could turn up anywhere - Lake Ellesmere, Dunedin, Invercargill. One bird was even sighted in the White Heron colony on the West Coast.

For years there has been a number of Royal Spoonbills in the Hawkes Bay, and every year Wayne Twyde and his team have been searching for banded birds. Finally, earlier this year a banded bird was sighted in a flock of 58. Sadly for Wayne and his team we know what happened to this bird. On 3 June it was found alive but sick at the Wairoa River. Unfortunately it died and we believe it was a victim of recent stormy weather. The bird was banded on 16 January 1996.

The young OSNZers at the Ward Field Study Course in January 96 helped band this year's chicks. Of the thirteen birds banded, to date five have been recorded elsewhere. Unfortunately one of these was the Hawkes Bay bird. Three others turned up at Farewell Spit and the last one at the Grove Arm, Marlborough Sounds.

But generally things have gone very quiet, and the stream of sightings over the past few years has become a trickle. In all I've had just six sightings this year, and three of them have been my own.

So if you happen to have an unreported sighting somewhere in your notebook, please send it in (Banding Office, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington). Also those early birds banded should be coming into their first nesting season. Royal Spoonbills are one bird species which is actually increasing and spreading. New colonies are establishing throughout the country. It would be great to discover banded birds breeding elsewhere.

If sending in a sighting please state which leg the bands are on. Remember it is the bird's left leg and the bird's right leg. I have not given any details of band combinations, as some people are inclined to fit the combination with the bird, rather than the other way around. But a hint - all colour bands are above the knee and the metal below. Unfortunately not all bands were superglued, and as a result some have slipped down and others have fallen off, so that some may have three colours and a metal, other two colours or less. Sorry about that - just do your best!

If you happen to see a banded bird, it may not necessarily be a Marlborough bird, as there are a few Dunedin banded birds out there also.

So, next time you see a Royal Spoonbill, take a closer look for coloured bands. If it does have them please try and read the colour combination and send it in. Even if you know someone else saw it the day before all records are valuable.

BILL CASH

Obituary - Joan Trollope

Joan, a long time member of the Society, passed away in April of this year from bone cancer.

Joan and husband Peter were a very active couple in the South Auckland region for many years until they thought it was time to slow down. Our sincere condolences to Peter, who has himself suffered a stroke and is now at Elmwood Village in Manurewa.

Anyone wishing to contact Peter for old time's sake should contact the writer.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Minutes - AGM 1996

The following are the MINUTES OF THE FIFTY SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND HELD AT FOXTON BEACH, MANAWATU, ON 1 JUNE 1996

PRESENT: Christopher Robertson, President, and 91 members.

APOLOGIES: Hazel and Tom Harty, Ben Bell, Paul Sagar, Stuart Lauder, Jill McDonald, Keith Owen, Bev Woolley, Janet Snell, Bev North, Betty Seddon, Folkert and Shirley Nieuwland, Alan Wright, Richard Holdaway, Bill Cash, ½ Bell Family, Peter Langlands, Jean Hawken, Michael Taylor, Dick Veitch, Raewyn Empson.

It was moved that the apologies be accepted.

(C. SCADDEN/M. NEE) CARRIED

TRIBUTE: One minute's silence was held in memory of Barrie Heather (ex Council member and Editor of *Notornis*) and Jenny Hawkins (ex Council member and RR. for Nelson).

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES: As the minutes of the 1995 AGM had been circulated, it was proposed that they be taken as read and adopted. (C. ROBERTSON/G. FOREMAN) CARRIED

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: In addition to his annual report which was circulated with the recent issue of *OSNZ News*, the President gave an update on a number of issues.

Membership: Concern was expressed over the seemingly high turnover of people in the Society resulting in a static membership. An enquiry into membership changes over the past five years is to be undertaken.

Meeting of Regional Representatives and Councillors: At this AGM RRs and councillors met together for the first time, an innovative experiment so that RRs can make a direct contribution to the running of the Society. It was resolved that for the next AGM, this process for decision-making will be developed further.

Council Member Co-opted: The Council resolved to co-opt Paul Sagar to fill the position of Jenny Hawkins.

Regional Representatives: Changes of RRs were noted:

Northland	Lorna Simpkin
Bay of Plenty	John Brierley
Wellington	Gavin Woodward
Nelson	Peter Gaze
West Coast	Bruce Stuart-Menteath

A resignation has been received from the acting RR for Volcanic Plateau, Keith Owen. It has been decided to merge the Bay of Plenty and Volcanic Plateau regions and to place the Coromandel Peninsula in the South Auckland region.

Field Investigation Officer: The position of Field Investigation Officer will fall vacant at the next AGM and will be advertised during the coming year.

Banding Liaison Officer: Dr Chris Challies will take up this position

Mentor Scheme: Ralph Powlesland has gathered together a list of names of people willing to be mentors for assisting members with planning, carrying out and writing up field studies.

Archives: The Auckland Institute and Museum Library will take over the task of curating and storing the official Society archives, with all such material remaining the property of the Society. A process for the archiving of members' material will be set up during the year. Kathy Barrow was thanked for all her work as Librarian.

National Gull and Tern Survey: This was successfully undertaken with a decline in numbers noted. It would be valuable to hold another survey in the coming year. Council will decide in September.

Junior Training Camp: Brian Bell was thanked for running this very successful field course for junior members.

Kaipara Field Study Course, January 1997: Money has been provided to assist young members to attend this summer course.

Tony Druce set of *Notornis* A complete set of *Notornis* has been presented to the Society to be awarded to young member(s). If the recipient(s) cease to be members, the set will be returned to the Society and reawarded.

Heather Memorial Glasses: A very good pair of binoculars was presented to Barrie and Rosemary Heather from the Society in appreciation of Barrie's contribution to the Society over many years. When no longer needed by the recipients, they will be returned to the Society and reawarded.

Awards: No nominations were received for the Falla Memorial Award or the A.T. Edgar Junior Award this year.

North Island tour: The President commented on his recent tour of regions in the North Island and proposes to do a similar tour of the South Island in July of this year.

***Notornis* and *OSNZ News*:** Improvements are still being made to these publications. There was discussion on incorporating material in the current regional newsletters into *OSNZ News* and *Notornis*

MATTERS ARISING: Concern was expressed by R. Schuckard about the scaling down of the National Wader Census.

FINANCIAL REPORT: The financial report had been previously circulated to members and there was no discussion.

The President commented on the debt the Society owes to the authors of the *Field Guide*, the Lottery Board and to the voluntary activities of members in ensuring that the subscription is maintained at a reasonable level.

The meeting agreed that the Auditor (John Mallinson) be reappointed.

The Treasurer commented that while it would not be necessary to raise subscriptions this year, this will need to be regularly reviewed in the future.

As there was no further discussion it was moved that the annual reports of the President and the Treasurer be adopted.

(C. ROBERTSON/D. LAWRIE) CARRIED

NOTICE OF MOTION: C. Robertson went briefly through the proposed constitution which had been circulated to members with the recent issue of *OSNZ News*. After some discussion from the floor, D. Medway clarified the following points raised:

4.2.1 It is not necessary to add the words "lease" after mortgage as this is covered in 4.1.

6.5 It is not necessary to add "or body" after person.

8.5 It is not necessary to add "general" to annual meeting.

14.6 Concern had been expressed over the implications of "Where an equality of votes occurs, the result shall be decided by the scrutineers" Scrutineers can decide such a matter in any way they see fit. In the event of an equality of votes where one of the persons nominated is already holding that office, the status quo remains.

14.8 An apparent ambiguity here as to whether the RR should serve for one year or two years is covered by Clause 14.3, stating that nominations for RRs are held annually. In response to a suggestion for a regional meeting quorum, it was not thought possible to fit a quorum for regional meetings as regions are too variable.

M. Nee congratulated the constitution committee, and members who had put forward suggestions, on the care taken in reviewing the constitution.

There being no further discussion the motion "That the constitution of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand current at the commencement of the 1996 AGM of the Society, or any adjournment of that meeting, be replaced in its entirety by the new constitution which has been endorsed by Council and circulated to all members" was put to the meeting.

(C. ROBERTSON/M. NEE) CARRIED

VOTE OF THANKS: B. Bell proposed a vote of thanks to all concerned in the review of the constitution.

(B.D. BELL/M. DAVIS) CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Kaipara Field Study Course: G. Pulham spoke about the course and answered questions. Gwenda was thanked by acclamation for her work in organising this week of bird study.

Local Newsletters and Levies: A Riegen expressed concern over the possible demise of regional newsletters which provoked much discussion. M. Graham queried the acceptability of donations at the door at regional meetings. C. Robertson explained that if newsletters are published in *OSNZ News*, information is available to every member and there is a saving of time and money within the regions. There would thus be a national focus rather than a restricted focus. N. Rothwell felt that some of their individuality would be lost by regions.

Publicity: C. Robertson told members about the telephone listing for OSNZ using the Membership Secretary's telephone number. So far it is proving useful with new members gained in this way. Regions are asked to submit ideas for publicity to the Secretary.

Wader Census: A. Riegen expressed concern that Wader Census information from regions is not being co-ordinated. He is to prepare a proposal for Council.

AGM Organisation: P. Gaze proposed a vote of thanks to Manawatu Region which was supported with acclamation.

1997 Annual Conference of The Society: The next AGM and conference will be held at Whangarei in Northland.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 9.54 p.m.

A.S. ROWE

Acting Secretary

Telephone number for Contacts

We now have a contact phone number in the Auckland region phone book. It is listed under Ornithological Society of New Zealand with our number to ring.

This has obviously proved invaluable, based on the number of calls received since the guide edition was printed and distributed. We have had two to three local enquiries per week, acquired four new members, a query from India of where the best birding sites in New Zealand are and one from a tour company in Australia.

Having this number under Ornithological Society has not been a detriment to those who are interested and who will go to any lengths to find out, and can only be beneficial in the long run.

HAZEL & TOM HARTY

Calendar of Events

1996

- 30 June - deadline of nominations for Awards to the Secretary
- 31 July - deadline for nominations for Regional Representative to the Secretary
- 31 August - CSN - deadline for material to CSN coordinators, updated job descriptions to Secretary
- 15 September - Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to the Field Investigations Officer
- 27 September - Council meeting
- 10 November - *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- 4-11 January - Kaipara Field Study Course
- 31 January - Interim annual reports (RRs, scheme convenors) to Secretary
- 10 February - *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- 28 February - Notices of Motion and Council nominations - deadline for submissions to Secretary
- 15 April - Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to the Field Investigations Officer
- 30 April - Convenors, RRs, Council annual reports due
- 10 May - *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- 29 May - Council and RRs meeting
- 30 May - OSNZ AGM weekend
- 30 June - deadline of nominations for Awards to the Secretary

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members and those who have rejoined.

Betty Rimmer, Vera Evans, Todd Nachewitz, Steven Bartlett, Letitia McRitchie, R.W. Roach, Wendy Prescott, Kirsten Benefield, Mark Corcoran, Bert Mom, Department of Conservation, Masterton, C.J. McKerrow, Ilona Heiskari, Gaye Hill, Clinton Care, Rosiland Cole, Cheryl McKenzie, Natascha Sobrino, Lyn Davidson, Matthew Lark, John Ewen, Stephen Sharp, Sandra Morris, Helen Gummer, Alistair Thompson, Janet

McCallum, John & Donnelle Hamilton, Marcia Green, Blair Jarvis, Brian & Judith Tyler, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, Caren Shrubshall, Don Goodale, Mark Sanders, Caroline Anderson, C.M. Bycroft, Elizabeth Beatson, A.D. (Sandy) Bull, Geoffrey Chambers, Beth Coleman, Rose Collen, J.E. & M. Crawford, Jackie Cass, Sam Edwards, Lesley Gowans, Dorothy Fioravanti, Ephra Garrett, Nick Green, Carol Hayson, Leigh Honnor, Andrew Heryet, Barry Hartley, S.M. Legge, Barbara Lovatt, James McGrail, Mrs L.M. McPhee, Chris & Robyn Smuts-Kennedy, Matthew Sheeman, Tony Sainsbury, Mr & Mrs G. Searle, Roger Sutton, Tina Troup, Bernice M. Thomas, Jacky Thain, Celia Thompson, B. Werlberger, David Wilson, Theresa Wyatt, Fergus Wheeler, Russell Thomas, Stuart Jenkins, Mr & Mrs R. Chipehase, Margaret Dowdell, Nikke Faircloth, R. & G. Eatwell.

Overseas members: David Griffin (UK), Ag. Science Library (USA), Peter Vodila (Czech Republic), Jim Lane (Canada), Kinokuniya Co. (Japan), Larry Spear (USA).

Science Fair winners for 1996: Natalie Cook, Bernard Morrison, Amy Lloyd, Caroline van Noordt, Melinda White, Victoria Waterhouse.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Donations to the Society

Many thanks to the following people for their generous donations, which will go to the fund specified:

Betty Rimmer, Paddy Latham, Kerry Walshe, Nancy Tanner, Raymond Jackson, Carole Long, Mr & Mrs N.D.R. McKercher, Prof R. & Mrs S. Court, Kirsten Benefield, Mike & Sharon Graham, W.J. Campbell, Ray O'Callaghan, Blair Jarvis, Mark Sanders.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Orange-fronted Parakeets

As part of a three year study into the taxonomic status of the Orange-fronted Parakeet, the Department of Conservation is undertaking a South Island-wide survey investigating the distribution of this species.

The present accepted taxonomic status is that it is only a colour morph of the Yellow-crowned Parakeet. However this has come under serious review in recent times and DoC has undertaken this project to establish once and for all the true status of the bird. The species is known to be very rare, and probably declining, so details of its actual tax-

onomy and ecology are urgently needed so that management can be undertaken.

This is the second year of the investigation, and the data so far are encouraging in respect of establishing an ecological difference between the two species. A new, and large, population of Orange-fronted Parakeets has been found in Canterbury, and samples from these and sympatric Yellow-crowned Parakeets have been collected for detailed DNA analysis. Last season's work suggested differences in vocalisation, a preference for their own species of call bird and preferential pairing, with none of the thirty pairs being mixed. This season, detailed investigations will be undertaken covering these apparent differences, as well as studies on diet, flocking and habitat use.

As part of the investigation an understanding of the national distribution of the species is urgently needed. Apart from the present known area (only two valleys), their historic distribution covered just about the entire South Island. I am asking OSNZ members to actively search for the species whenever they are in areas which contain parakeets.

Most field guides are fairly accurate in their descriptions with respect to separating the two species. However, their illustrations are not accurate and should be ignored, especially those in Falla, Sibson and Turbott. Identification of parakeets is tricky, but by no means impossible. The differences in crown colouration (orange vs crimson) and frontal band colouration (lemon-yellow vs gold) are fairly obvious with good views. The Orange-fronted also appears as a more uniform pure, cold green, whereas the Yellow-crowned has a distinct yellow wash to the underside body feathers.

If you encounter this species, please note all details such as site, numbers, association with other species, behaviour, indeed any details that you deem relevant. Please also note if you do not encounter Orange-fronted Parakeets in any area, especially if you do see parakeets.

Information on parakeets in New Zealand is sadly lacking, so you can help a great deal in this study by contributing to establish this parakeet in its rightful place within the New Zealand avifauna. Please send all details as soon as you have them to:

JOHN KEARVELL
Department of Conservation
Private Bag
Christchurch

Albino Birds

On 24 March 1996, I observed a near white oystercatcher among a group of about twenty normal South Island Pied Oystercatchers on a high tide roost in

the Firth of Thames. The roost was visible from the Forest and Bird observatory adjacent to Thames. The bird had black-tipped primaries and a few "speckles" of black on its head and breast, but the rest of the plumage was white.

The visiting Russian ornithologist Dr Pavel Tomkovich also reported seeing a white oystercatcher in the Firth while he was staying at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust centre earlier in March.

MEL GALBREATH

From the Canterbury Museum collection are several albino South Island Pied Oystercatchers, and a complete and partial albino Starling

Lloyd Esler reports Two albino New Zealand Pigeons on Stewart Island, two partial albino Blackbirds in Queen's Park, Invercargill and a full albino Blackbird in Otatara.

A part albino Myna

A pale coloured Indian Myna has recently been associating with a "regular" mate in the Oparau area, 60 km southwest of Hamilton. Ian Reid and John Kendrick spotted the bird possibly nesting in a farm dwelling around three months before it was captured, and then photographed it at Tom Buckley's farm. The bird, rather than being pure white, was a fawn colour, with pink eyes but yellow feet and bill.

The part albino coot seen on Hamilton's Lake Rotoroa (*OSNZ News* 71) has so far not returned to the lake since 30 October 1994.

A fully albino Tui was also seen by members of a canoeing party on the Whanganui River, 30 km downstream from Taumarunui. On 14 January 1996 Sarah Grummitt of Hamilton was among several people to identify the bird, which was mixing with a group of "regular" Tui.

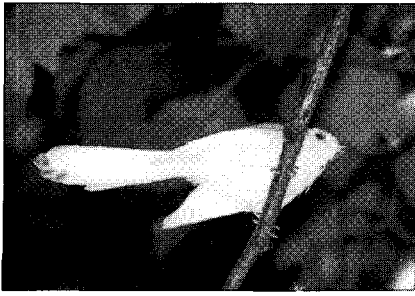
TOM BUCKLEY/PAUL CUMING

Albino Fantail

In January 1996 Diane Morse from Oruanui Road, about 10 km from Taupo, phoned me to tell of a white Fantail in her garden. My husband, a friend, Bett Davies, and I went out the following afternoon and found the bird easily.

It was flitting around in a low wattle tree in a shrubbery, darting after insects and returning many times to the same branch in true fantail style. We were able to observe it closely for some time.

The Fantail is pure white, except for an almost indiscernible smudge of grey at the tip of its tail feathers. It has dark eyes, a yellowish-pink bill and pink legs. It is a young bird, as not all of its tail fan has developed yet.



Albino fantail near Taupo. Photo Taupo Times.

I would be interested to know if anyone else has seen an albino Fantail before, and what other albino species have been recorded around the country.

JANET DRAKE



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

RAREBITS

Rarebits is the Department of Conservation's internal quarterly newsletter about threatened species work and is edited by Dave Butler. It is based on reports from DoC conservancies about their work, with other items from individuals involved in particular work. The Editor is grateful to DoC for permission to use extracts of interest to OSNZ members.

Brown Kiwi - Year two of research on kiwi threats has seen possum and predator control implemented by Pete Graham at two of the study areas near Whangarei. Possums have been dealt to by hand spreading 1080 baits, while smaller areas involved jam and cyanide. Pat Miller has been monitoring the survival of 36 radio-tagged kiwi in the poisoned blocks and others in non-poisoned blocks, with no kiwi mortality or breeding effects detected in the initial four months. Those results should allay some fears that 1080 will kill kiwi.

Meanwhile predator trapping is bagging very low numbers of ferrets, stoats, weasels and cats, but some cats are still living in the study area. The ten kiwi juveniles released on Motokawanui have spread right across the island. Rogan Colbourne has collected additional eggs for incubation and rearing at various institutions around the North Island, with the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre playing a pivotal role. The Centre has four incubators sponsored largely by the local business community including one contract roller crusher!

Little Shearwaters - Coppermine Island Little Shearwaters have been virtually

cleaned out this (1995) breeding season, with only one of the twenty or so study nests surviving to the late chick stage. Kiore sign was present at all failed nests. By contrast, a similar sized sample of nests on Lady Alice Island are doing well with only one (perhaps two) having failed at the time of writing. No kiore sign has been detected on Lady Alice Island since poisoning in September 1994.

(Ray Pierce, Karen Riddell, John Beachman)

Black Petrels - Mike Imber and his contract team have been setting up new research efforts on Black Petrel breeding on Great Barrier Island. Mike also recently resurveyed burrows on Little Barrier Island and discovered two transferred Black Petrel 'chicks' on the island - a first. Good news, but overall breeding activity seemed to be very low.

(Shaarina Boyd)

Kokako - Nesting success at Mapara was not as dramatic as last year, due both to poor fruiting and increased rat numbers. However the population continues to grow. The latest tally was 86 adult birds with many mobile sub-adults (from the 1994/95 season) still unidentified. This means that the population has doubled in four years (there were 47 birds at the end of the 1991/92 season). This year 20 pairs attempted to breed but only nine were successful, producing 17 fledged young. Interestingly, in the 200m bait station spacing, 70% of nests were lost to predators, while in the 100m spacing only 30% were lost to predators. This suggests that rats were responsible for the majority of nest losses in the 200m bait station spacing part of the reserve. The fact that only 30% of nests were lost to predators in the 100m bait station spacing area (some being rats and others not identified) in spite of the absence of mustelid control, tempts one to conclude that mustelids are not responsible for preying on a high percentage of Kokako nests. Even if it does prove to be true for Kokako however, it is not the case for flightless species such as kiwi and hole-nesting species such as Yellowhead. Once kiwi are released at Mapara we will have to restart our mustelid control efforts and increase their intensity. Even in years when there is little fruit in the forest and predator numbers (rats, stoats) are high, the increased number of productive (breeding) pairs has meant that a reasonable number of young Kokako are produced and recruited into the population.

Meanwhile at Mangatutu, in the northern part of the Pureora Forest, the Threatened Species Trust Programme's Kokako protection programme (supported by State Insurance and the Waikato Regional Council) got off to a great start with 500 ha of Kokako habitat under a protective veil of bait stations by the start of nesting. The network is gradually being extended, so that over

1000 ha will be protected next year. The response from the Kokako was very encouraging. Of the six known pairs, two have definitely fledged chicks, one pair has almost certainly fledged one or more chicks and another two pairs have re-nested after possibly fledging chicks. The total budget of \$36,000 has covered the purchase of bait stations and bait and the establishment of a bait station network over 1,000 ha. It also covered the employment for eight months of Laurence Gordon, the enthusiast who thought up the idea, organised the funding and executed the project with dogged determination. He has had the help of several volunteers and Louise Cole, a Task Force Green worker organised through the Otorohanga District Council and the Otorohanga Zoo Society, which is coordinating the project. All these parties deserve a pat on the back for their achievements.

At Waipapa (another part of Pureora Forest) a "mainland island" initially covering 1,500 ha has got under way. Again we have gone for a bait station operation with stations spaced at 150 m intervals. The difference at Waipapa is that we are monitoring almost everything that breathes. Twelve pairs of NZ Robins and twelve single males (as with Kokako, female robins appear to be more vulnerable to predation) were monitored during the use of 1080 baits in stations and then the later use of Talon. No evidence was found of loss of robins due to the use of either toxin. 60% of the robin pairs (and none of the single males!) were successful at fledging young. Results for some other species are: Kokako - one pair out of six pairs checked so far have fledged young; Kereru - despite determined searching, no nests were located; Morepork - Ralph Powlesland has five with transmitters on and has monitored them throughout the poisoning operation. All have survived to date.

(Phil Thomson)

NZ Falcon - We have been absolutely inundated with New Zealand Falcon sightings following the publicity of the OSNZ/NZ Raptor Association survey. Judging by their wide distribution and the range of habitats they are being seen in in this conservancy (Tongariro/Taupo), it would appear the species is more than holding its own here. Hopefully the news is as good from the rest of the country.

(Cam Speedy, Cathy Jones)

N.Z. Pigeon - Annual monitoring of Kereru feasting on a seasonal spring food source (willow and silver poplar buds) was undertaken at a site just north of Wanganui. This monitoring, which is an absolute doddle for those tarmac rangers out there, has been undertaken for the past five years over a stretch of Wanganui highway. Counts are made late afternoon for 14 consecutive days. Numbers have reached around 150 birds at

their peak. While the previous four years have shown regular numbers turning up, this year's were a little more disturbing. Overall numbers were a little more than half that in previous years. It was notable that birds had only disappeared from one particular portion of the 'transect' so perhaps something other than natural causes had caused the drop in numbers. We have no formal data on whether Kereru return to the same trees they feasted on the previous year, but we do have a clue. One particular bird, known as the 'Khaki Campbell' because of its colouring, has returned to the same group of trees for the past three years, suggesting there may be some relationship.

(Wayne Hutchinson, John Barkla)

NZ Robin/Takahe - Six pairs of robins (surviving from the transfer from Kapiti last June) were monitored through the breeding season and five of these successfully fledged chicks; the other pair built nests but no eggs were laid. The success indicates that Mana is able to support robins and we will proceed with another transfer as planned, probably in April/May. Five pairs and one trio of Takahe produced 17 eggs. Nine eggs hatched successfully but only four survived beyond six weeks of age and are still alive. With nearly 50% infertility/embryo death, the problems besetting Takahe productivity continue. The lack of supplementary food does not appear to have reduced egg output, with one pair producing a clutch of three eggs which all hatched and two chicks survive to the present (one having been fostered by an unproductive pair).

National Wildlife Centre, Mount Bruce

- It's been another successful year for Shore Plover at Mount Bruce, with four pairs fledging 16 juveniles, including a record four egg clutch (usually max. three), which all hatched and fledged. Last year's first successful Campbell Island Teal pair went one better this season, producing two females and a male offspring. This brings more much-needed females to the captive population - now totalling six females and nine males. A second pair, between a wild-origin male and last season's captive-bred female, formed a dominant pair in one flock and produced eggs, although none hatched. The Stitchbird season got off to a good start with the trio and a captive-bred pair fledging six juveniles. Unfortunately four of the juveniles and the captive-bred pair were subsequently lost to disease. Despite ongoing improvement to the health management regime for Stitchbirds we are still very much in research mode. Two juvenile Kokako produced by our captive pair will be released on Kapiti Island, taking the total to seven captive-bred birds released on Kapiti.

(Raewyn Empson, John Sawyer)

Taiko - After a good breeding season last year, the number of chicks this year

has doubled. Five chicks have hatched in the southern burrow area and staff are fairly certain of a sixth in the northern burrows. This is the best breeding rate for Taiko ever! Rat control work has been undertaken over the past two months, and monitoring of chick progress is currently under way. An area to be fenced as a 'safe breeding area' has been investigated and will be the next major step in the programme. As reported in the media, Black Robin numbers have now exceeded 200, with successful breeding on both Rangatira and Mangere Islands.

(John Andrew)

Dabchick Census

Well, what a mighty day! The NZ Dabchick census of the Muriwai and South Kaipara lakes was held on 26 April 1996. Numbers of dabchicks are generally up and similar to those of the 1970s and early 80s. Dabchicks were observed at all sites except three. Leighton's Lake in particular has increased from six birds last year to twelve adults and three juveniles this season. This is interesting, because this beautiful coastal wetland has been drained twice in recent years for maintenance purposes. This wetland also had hundreds of Grey Teal on it two years ago, as the area looked like a large, shallow coastal swamp, the preferred habitat for the species. By contrast we only observed six Grey Teal on this census. Raupo is however spreading rapidly and forming dense stands. This in turn may, however, benefit Australasian Bitterns, crakes and rails.

The first group to visit the Kereta Main Lake was in for a couple of pleasant surprises. Firstly, the sighting of an Australian Little Grebe at the lake's northward end - in previous years they have been observed on Kereta South One. The other surprise was the presence of five New Zealand Scaup. Despite the lack of dabchicks, Lake Kuwatai also offered good birding. The lake was the only one to record two bitterns. Shags also feature prominently here, with four species present and in excess of 100 Pied Shags.

Lake Ototoa, the largest lake in the census, had the dabchick high of the day with 23 birds.

Beforehand, permission had been sought to visit Hedley's farm, off Nancy's Lane. In previous years at about this time Black Stilts have been recorded on Hedley's or neighbouring properties. With the tide nearly full in, any wading birds choosing to stay in the area are forced to come further inland, away from mudflats or shellbanks. From Hedley's we were able to see a group of Pied Stilts on low-lying paddocks resting, grooming and taking short flights. With them were two completely black Black Stilts.

Perfect weather and the assistance of 21 people who gave up their time to benefit this important annual work made this a memorable day. Sincere thanks to Gwenda Pulham for her help, and to Murray Jones who put in considerable effort to ensure that each site which needed a boat had one.

CHRIS BINDON

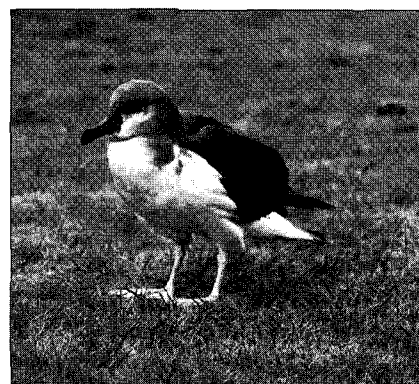
Table of results on next page

Mollymawks visit Whitianga...

On 23 June 1996, after several days of heavy rain and strong north-easterly wind, I received a call saying that a young albatross had been resting on a reserve behind Buffalo Beach, Whitianga, since the day before. I arrived to find a juvenile Grey-headed Mollymawk. Despite light rain, I was able to observe and photograph it from the comfort of my car for over an hour. It appeared to be in no distress, stood up and preened itself every little while and occasionally stretched its wings. It seemed to ignore me.

It subsequently moved to a nearby back door step where it readily accepted offerings of fish, suggesting that it had not properly reached independence. First year birds normally leave Campbell Island in May. As it looked like becoming a permanent bludger, plans were made to deport it aboard a fishing vessel. However my informant, Elizabeth Rae, tells me that on 27 June it went missing. She found it at the top of the beach. It made several short runs, flapping its wings and eventually running into the water. It floated out to sea and eventually disappeared into the mist and rain. To my knowledge nobody saw it in flight but there was no reason to believe that it could not fly. Pam Agnew has shown my photos to other South Auckland members and they agree that the all dark bill, the grey head and the dark underwing establish my identification.

BRUCE MACKERETH



Juvenile Grey-headed Mollymawk, Whitianga.

Photo: Bruce Mackereth

MURIWAI/S.K.H. LAKES/DABCHICK CENSUS

... and Mangaweka

On 5 July a juvenile Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was recovered from Pukeokahu, east of Mangaweka - a long way from the sea. The albatross was found sitting in four inches of snow. It was brought back to Wanganui where it was looked after overnight.

The bird had been banded three weeks earlier by Wellington CAS at Trentham Prison and was subsequently released off Mana Island. It is now in the care of a Wellington bird rescue worker, hopefully looking forward to long flights over the ocean. The Whanganui Chronicle ran a story on the unusual find, along with a large colour photo on the front cover of the following day's paper.

LEIGH GRAHAM

Mystery Bird #24

The last mystery bird is obviously a waterbird of sorts, and a rather active one at that, which makes identification rather difficult. The face and bill are obscured by water (although the left leg can actually be seen under the body). What can be seen are the pale underparts with dark streaking along the flank, a white undertail, and grey-centred, white-edged feathers along the side. This solidifies into a smooth, medium-tone grey on the upper breast, shoulder and nape. The back is also smooth grey (possibly darker?), with a pair of broad white streaks down the mantle and a thinner pale line down the top of the folded wing area. The head is largely either in or covered by water, it appears to be generally dark (the apparent pale on the head is light reflecting off its wet plumage). Structurally, we have little to go on. The bill, which is often a giveaway to the general bird group, is not visible. The pointed wings project slightly past the tail tip. Our identification may have to be mainly on plumage rather than structure.

We can eliminate any long-necked birds structurally, however, as our mystery bird has a short neck. This rules out shags, cormorants and darters, gannets and boobies. Of the true seabirds, many are ruled out by the greyish pale-bellied plumage. The most likely contenders would be the prions *Pachyptila* spp. They have dark markings on their upperparts forming an inverted "W" in flight. Our bird has pale longitudinal stripes, so this is not a prion. Likewise the smaller grey *Pterodroma* petrels also lack these stripes. Taking our bird not to be a *Procellariiform* or *Pelecaniform* seabird, we can move onto the wildfowl.

Structurally our bird looks wrong for a start to be a duck, being short and tapered, stout around the "shoulders",

DATE: 25 April 1996
 START TIME: 10.00 am
 WEATHER: Fine, sunny, calm

SPECIES	LAKES											TOTALS	
	SOUTH HEAD LAKE	OTOTOA	KUWAKATAI	KERETA NORTH ONE	KERETA MAIN	KERETA MAIN (SOUTH)	KERETA SOUTH ONE	TE KANAE	LEIGHTON'S DAM	MACAMDAMIA PONDS	SHELLY BEACH PONDS		
N.Z. DABCHICK	1	23		1	10	2	2	3	15				57
AUST. LITTLE GREBE					1								1
BLACK SHAG			9		3	1		3	1				17
PIED SHAG			100+						26		1		127+
LITTLE BLACK SHAG			4										4
LITTLE SHAG	1	22	6		4	1			1				35
WHITE FACED HERON					P								P
BITTERN	1		2	1	1				1				6
BLACK SWAN			5		62	6	2		7				82
PARADISE SHELDUCK			6		150	21			24		2		203
MALLARD	24	3	33	20	100+	8			45	6			239+
GREY DUCK					130						3		133
GREY TEAL									6				6
N.Z. SHOVELER									11				11
N.Z. SCAUP					5								5
AUST. HARRIER	1		3	1	1			2	P				8+
SPOTLESS CRAKE													
PUKEKO			19	P	P				P				19+
AUST. COOT													
PIED STILT													
SPUR-WINGED PLOVER			7		P	2							9+
KINGFISHER			2		P			1					3+
WELCOME SWALLOW			20	P	P			P	P				20+
FERNBIRD													
GREY WARBLER					P			P	P				P
FANTAIL					P			P	P				P
SILVEREYE					P				P				P
FINCH SPECIES					P				P				P
CATTLE EGRET			1										18

Observers: P. & D. Agnew, L. Alston, T. Barton, C. Bindon, B. Binning, K. Bond, K. Catt S. Chamberlin, H. Cogle, J. Driessen, N. Green, C. Hayson, B. Jones, M. Jones, T. Kitching, R., Orange, G. Pulham, E. Richards, M. Taylor, E. Wnoroski.

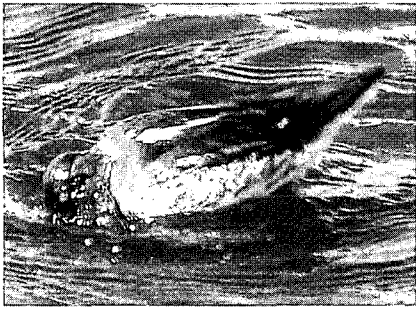
Notes:

- 1) P = Present, but not counted
- 2) Juvenile Dabchicks included in totals for Kereta Main, Te Kanae & Leighton's
- 3) Okaihau, Okiritoto Swamp and Kereta Swamps, were not visited.

and sitting high in the water (although its position could cause this last effect). In relation to the ripple and water droplet size it also appears small. All of the ducks in New Zealand can simply be ruled out by the pale sides, while the short neck rules out geese and swans. So freshwater fowl are not contenders either.

Mystery bird #24 is not our "regular" New Zealand waterbird, then. The next

group in the field guide that might hold a possibility is the waders (I'm assuming that a rail, if swimming, would neither look this buoyant nor long-winged/tailed). All the waders have the potential to swim. Few do so as a matter of course, although Bar-tailed Godwits have been witnessed floating in West Africa, apparently as a cooling mechanism through their legs. This was quite unusual though, and swimming is par for the course for



only one group of waders, the phalaropes (subfamily Phalaropodinae). This is a trio of strange sandpipers, the Red-necked *Phalaropus lobatus*, Red *P. fulicaria*, and Wilson's *Steganopus tricolor*. All are on the New Zealand list as vagrants.

The white streaks down the back do not fit Wilson's, which has in winter a grey back, in summer a darker brown, grey and chestnut back. Both Red-necked and Red Phalaropes do show streaking on their backs in breeding plumage. Our bird is in breeding plumage, evidenced by the lack of pale on the side of the head. In non-breeding plumage, phalaropes become very pale birds, with white sides to the head and neck and with a dark eyestripe. In Red Phalaropes (also known as Grey Phalaropes!), the edging on the rest of the upperpart feathers is quite pale, giving a more scalloped effect than in Red-necked. Most obviously, of course, is the fact that Red Phalaropes in breeding plumage show solid red underparts. In our bird, the pale underparts, smooth grey back with pale streaks and darkish head show it to be a Red-necked Phalarope. The two sexes of this bird can be differentiated, and the lack of pale edging between the pale streaks down the back suggest that this bird is a female.

The Red-necked Phalarope is a very rare visitor to New Zealand, with only four records since 1935, when a bird was collected near Wanganui. Phalaropes are unusual in that they have reversed sexual dimorphism, in which females are brighter than males. Red-necked Phalaropes breed in the lower Arctic and sub-arctic tundra, and winter mainly at sea off western South America, West and south-western Africa. Fortunately, while phalaropes are extremely rare in New Zealand, they can be extremely confiding - just look at George Chance's stunning photograph of a Red Phalarope in *OSNZ News* 73.

PHIL BATTLETT

Bar-coded Penguins?

Bar codes similar to those used at supermarket check-outs glued to the beaks of penguins could provide clues to how the world's environment is changing, biologists said at a recent meeting of the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge,

UK.

"To us, almost every penguin looks the same" said John Croxall. Researchers had tested transponders, based on technology that allows individual aircraft to be identified and tracked. These can be injected into penguins. But they alone are not enough. Scientists need to be able to see which birds are marked.

An infrared detector must be able to detect the code at a much greater distance than a supermarket reader, as a penguin will not willingly swipe its beak across a panel. Luckily penguins follow well-worn paths and biologists have already installed bridges that weigh and measure the birds as they cross. Croxall reckons detectors could be installed at these narrow entrances. The equipment must also work in temperatures as low as minus 70 C, in driving snow.

Getting the bar codes and transponders onto the birds presents another set of challenges. Croxall ruefully showed where he had been bruised. "You don't tackle a King or Emperor with impunity", he added.

MAGGIE FOX

Reuters News Service



Black-necked Stork, Daintree River, Far North Queensland 2-12-94.

Photo: Pam Agnew

On the Esplanade

Shorebird viewing from the Cairns Esplanade is as good as anywhere. Sitting under a shady tree, without a hide, and watching as many as twenty species of wader come within 50 metres, is remarkable.

At least three egret species, two herons, a spoonbill, two ibises, two fishing raptors and one scavenger, a gull, four terns and over fifteen regular land birds add up to over fifty species that can easily be seen from one place. And let's not forget the pelicans, the area's most photographed subject.

I was talking to two ladies from Whangarei, in April just before the waders left. One lady was a birder, the other was not.

"Can you tell my friend" said the one who wasn't "where to watch birds in Cairns?"

And then there was the English lady who, with her back to the about twenty species she had never seen in her life, enthusiastically telling me about all the birds that came into her garden. She finished by saying "And one day, I had four tits in one tree!" It is not just the birds on the Cairns Esplanade that are remarkable.

Sheila Petch, our Canterbury RR, has recently returned from Cairns, having seen, among other things, a male Rufous Owl in the middle of town. He and his mate live mainly on flying foxes, but they can catch possums just as easily. They can catch one, then land on a branch and gut it, faster than I can type this. Would you like us to send over a few thousand Rufous Owls? Powerful Owls are even better at it.

ANDY ANDERSON

New Parrot Association

A new special interest group devoted to the study of wild parrots in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania is to be formed within the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. The BIRDS Australia Parrot Association will focus interest on some of the region's rarest species, like the Kakapo and Orange-bellied Parrot, as well as some of the most abundant and difficult to manage, like the Long-billed Corella and Galah. As most threatening processes in the region - clearance of habitat, change in fire regime, loss of hollows etc - also threaten a least one species of parrot, the Association will promote discussion and an exchange of ideas that should benefit many other bird species as well.

The Association will have a newsletter, *Eclectus*, run expeditions and projects and prepare policies on parrot-related matters. It will be formed officially on 7 October 1996 at a special meeting in Albany, Western Australia, but members joining before the end of September will receive the first issue of *Eclectus*, will be paid until the end of 1997 and will have the chance to vote for the founding committee of the Association. Forms for membership, which costs A\$18.00 or less, are available from the Membership Officer, BIRDS Australia Parrot Association, c/o RAOU, 415 River Road, Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123, Australia.

STEPHEN GARNETT

Convenor,

BIRDS Australia Parrot Association
Email - sgarnett@eastend.com.au

NZ Wildlife Rehabilitation Trust

The New Zealand Wildlife Rehabilitation Trust has been formed with goals of constructing and operating a facility for the care and treatment of injured or oiled wildlife, developing teams of trained individuals preparing for an oiled wildlife response, and increasing public awareness of habitat conservation. Considerable progress is being made towards New Zealand being the first country in the world to develop a comprehensive oil spill contingency plan prior to encountering a serious spill. The Trust board includes representation from the Maritime Safety Authority, Department of Conservation, Auckland Zoo, Bird Rescue Auckland and the RSPCA.

The NZWRT is currently developing a national pool of volunteers to respond to emergencies involving wildlife. Selected volunteers will be asked to take part in specialised training courses in 1996/97. Training courses will emphasise personal safety and oil spill contingency.

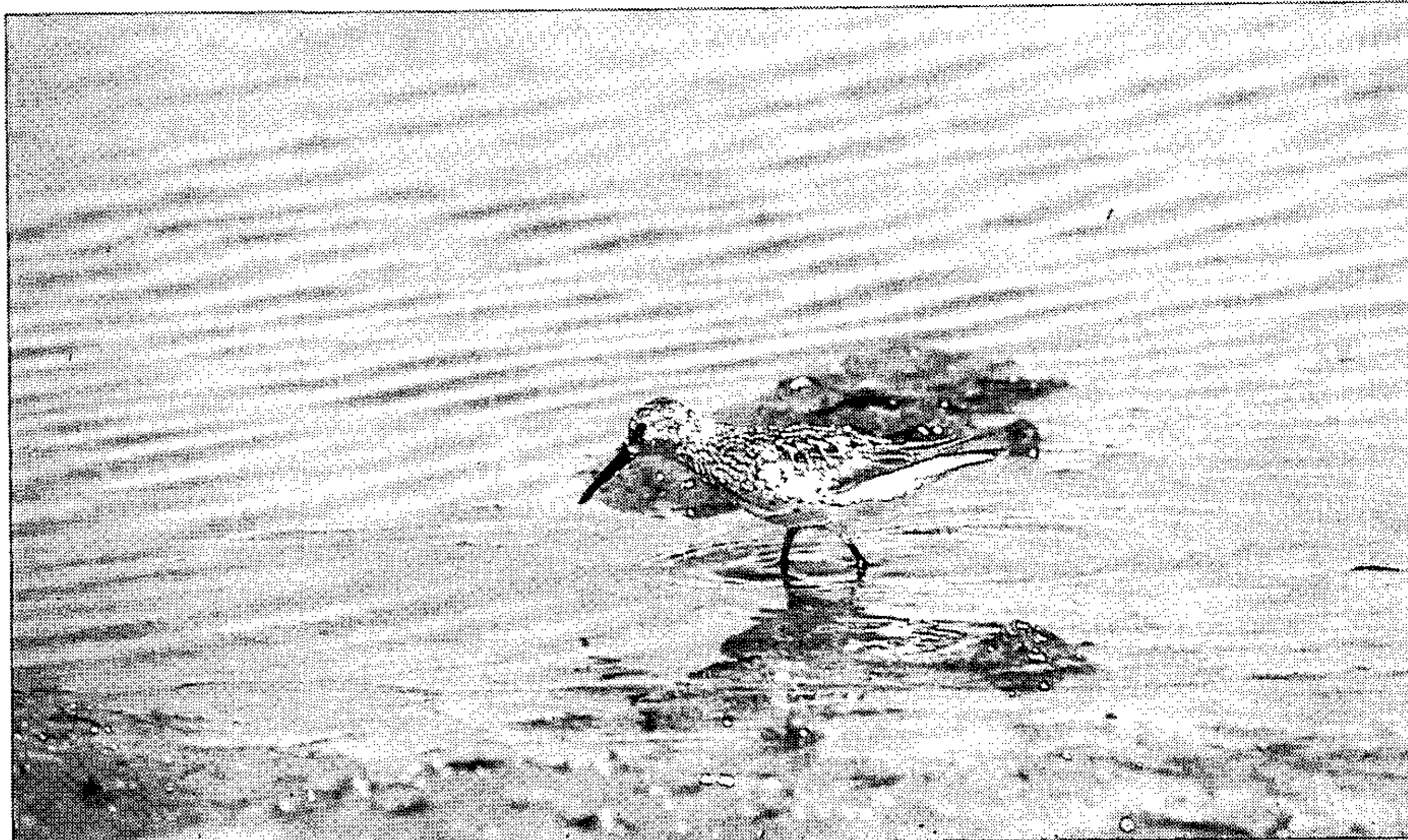
If you are interested in being considered for training to become a NZWRT volunteer, and for more information and a volunteer registration form, please contact:

KARRIE ROSE
NZ Wildlife Rehabilitation Trust
Penman House
UNITEC
147 Carrington Road
Pt Chevalier
Auckland
Ph/fax (09) 849 3656.

World Bird Count

NTT, a Japanese telecommunications provider, will hold the second "NTT World Bird Count" from 28 September to 13 October this year. As in last year's first "NTT World Bird Count", an inventive birdwatching event of the coming "multimedia era", birding reports from around the world will be compiled and publicised via the Internet and other communications means. NTT will donate 1,000 Japanese yen (approximately US\$10.00) per every reported species to Birdlife International. The donation will be used for wildlife conservation activity.

NTT World Bird Count is concurrently organised with the "Festival Mundial de las Aves" (World Birdwatch), an event organised by Birdlife International worldwide on odd years and only in the Americas in even years, with over 200 collaborating organisations. This year, World Birdwatch will focus on threatened birds and the need to protect key areas to protect them.



Mystery Bird #25

Identify this bird. Answer next issue

You are cordially invited to participate in these events. When you, whether as a group or an individual, have a birdwatching event during this period, please send: (1) common names and scientific names of observed birds, (2) your name and address (plus number of participants in case you are a group), (3) date and location and, (4) comments on birds and birdwatching, to the following address. Your report needs to arrive by 31 October.

"NTT World Bird Count" Office

E-mail: wbc@wnn.or.jp

URL: <http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/w-bird/>

or mail: Birdlife International

Pan-American Office

P.O. Box 17-17-717

El Nacional 304 y el Telegrafo

Quito, Ecuador

E-mail: birdlife@cipa.org.ec

Regional Roundup

Northland

Hugh Robertson spoke to our May meeting on the progress of the Kiwi Recovery Programme, charting the status of the six kiwi species with slides and graphs. Northland is one of the strongholds of the North Island Brown Kiwi, and some of the habitats are threatened with change, with wandering dogs a major problem.

In July we enjoyed an interesting talk from Gerry Brackenbury about his visit to Stephens Island, accompanied by some beautiful slides. He outlined the

history of the island and the impact that the arrival of the lighthousekeepers had on the unique flora and fauna. Gerry also described some aspects of the management plan for the estimated 30,000 unique giant weta, endemic Hamilton's Frog and the South Island Skink.

The Whangarei and Kaipara Harbour censuses were carried out in June as usual, but the Far North census was postponed for two weeks due to strong winds and rain, so an impromptu pot-luck dinner was held at Lorna Simpkin's house, followed by slides of Chatham Island.

Pauline Smith has organised mist netting of passerines (mainly Silvereyes) at Wren Greechan's property as a continuation of our on-going banding study, and reasonable numbers of new birds are being captured.

Monthly beach patrols continue as usual. In May several of the largest birds came ashore - Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, giant petrel and Grey-headed Mollymawk. One of each species was in good condition so John Nicole has mounted them. The giant petrel looks magnificent with wings outspread - flying forever. I have not seen the others yet but I am sure they will also be impressive.

Our planned weekend, combined with Far North members, to go over to Motukawanui Island and plant trees has been postponed twice due to heavy swells - we plan to try again on 9-10 August...weather permitting!

(Lorna Simpkin)

Auckland

Our May meeting was a particularly diverse one. Michael Taylor spoke on shags, Gwenda Pulham on Fairy Terns, Adrian Riegen on waders and Mel Galbreath told us of the introduction of Stitchbirds on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

At the June meeting Ray Pierce spoke on the status of kiwi in Northland, and of the success in rearing kiwi chicks in captivity. Ray also spoke on the interre-

lationship between Pycroft's Petrel and Little Shearwaters on the Hen and Chickens Islands.

Graeme Taylor gave a talk at our July meeting on the Antipodes Islands. An objective for Graeme's trip to the islands was a census of the penguin rookeries and, although counts have been intermittent over the years, it appears that numbers of birds are down. There is some difficulty in ascertaining why this should be, but the continuity of the food supply does raise questions.

On a fine sunny day in April, 21 members carried out a survey of the birds on the Muriwai/South Kaipara lakes under the leadership of Chris Bindon. The main objective was a count of NZ Dabchick and it was found that numbers compared favourably with those of the 1970s and early 1980s when figures were considered high. A total of 57 was recorded. An Australian Little Grebe was seen and the reappearance of NZ Scaup on the main Kereta lake was of interest. Six Australasian Bitterns were sighted and a lone Cattle Egret in the company of a donkey. Hedley's Farm was visited with two Black Stilts seen.

The wader census of the Kaipara and Manukau Harbours in June had a very good muster of members, even though the weather was not conducive to counting birds. Significant counts on the South Kaipara were 7,900 South Island Pied Oystercatchers, three Black Stilts, 53 NZ Dotterels, 631 Banded Dotterels, seven Little Terns and 20 Black-billed Gulls. Three Far-eastern Curlews were seen at Big Sand Island.

23 members enjoyed the annual mid-year Christmas dinner at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Centre on 20 July. Nick Green followed up with interesting slides of his travels in Fiji and Siberia.

On 19 May at Waikiri Creek, Taporā North, 15 Fairy Terns were seen and 18 Royal Spoonbills at Rat Island on 20 June. Cattle Egrets have again returned to Haranui, Parakai, with 51 being recorded on 7 July. Auckland region is not without its exotic birds - 38 Rainbow Lorikeets were seen at Birkenhead on 2 July. Aviary-bred, the birds are released each morning, have free range during the day and return to the aviary at nightfall. A pair of Bellbirds have been sighted at Motuora Island and it is to be hoped that they are a breeding pair.

(Doug Booth)

South Auckland

Despite atrocious weather, 16 June saw many members participating in the Manukau Harbour winter census, during which several noteworthy sightings were made. Spoonbills featured heavily and totalled 75. The majority were in the Mangere area, but there were also 13 at Waiuku, six at Waikaraka and a singleton at Kidds. Also seen during the cen-

sus were three Little Egrets at Waiuku, a Black Stilt and four smudgies at Puhinui, and Kidds produced a Grey Plover, two Red-necked Stilts and a Mongolian/Large Sand Dotterel.

Tony Habraken came up trumps with a Black-fronted Tern hawking over wet paddocks in Waiuku - not a common occurrence in our region.

During the previous weekend it was the turn of the Firth of Thames to have its birds counted, thankfully in much better weather. The winter count of Wrybills numbered approximately 2,500, which were frequenting the newly named Rangipo Spit (formerly the Neill's property). Other records include 58 Cattle Egrets at Piako, a smudgy Black Stilt and a Royal Spoonbill which has subsequently been joined by two others.

After several rather prosaic beach patrols (May's especially so, when no birds were picked up), things improved in June and July with 18 and 43 finds respectively. Included in July's total were 22 Fluttering Shearwaters, ten Fairy Prions, four Australasian Gannets, and one each of Grey-faced Petrel, Red-billed Gull and Salvin's Prion.

Census work and beach patrols aside, there have also been a reasonable number of interesting bird sightings in our region. For example, two separate records of Kotuku, the earlier being one at Lake Whangape on 19 June and subsequently at Tairua on the Coromandel Peninsula ten days later (sighted by Bruce MacKereth). Interestingly the Tairua bird has been seen at intervals since September 1995.

There have also been three separate reports of Black-fronted Dotterels in South Auckland lately. Two are currently frequenting the airport at Mangere, and one was seen at Waiuku Sandspit on 8 April. A visiting English birder claims one at Access bay, Miranda on 25 April. Could this sudden increase be part of a move northwards for the species? Let's hope so.

In addition to Tony Habraken's Black-fronted Tern sighting, he can also lay claim to a Fairy Tern at Kidds on the Manukau (not a normal site) and a Common Tern at Mataitai on 30 March. While on the subject, Gwenda Pulham found an Arctic Tern roosting at Taramaife, Miranda, on 5 May.

Finally, and sadly, an Australasian Bittern in immaculate condition was picked up dead alongside the road near Access Bay by Jim and Natalie Hague. This may well have been the same bird which frequented the lake outside the Miranda Trust Centre, which is ironic in that it is now destined to spend many years inside that same building as part of a bird display currently under development.

At our evening meeting in June, Debbie Stewart gave a most inspiring talk on the use of falconry on the rehabilita-

tion of injured or abandoned harriers and New Zealand Falcons. It was refreshing to see that the normally unforgiving practice of falconry can be put to beneficial use and, through her hard work and dedication, many birds have made it successfully back into the wild.

In July Chrissy Wickes from the Department of Conservation updated us on her work with the nesting Fairy Terns in the north Auckland area. Few people realise that the Fairy Tern is New Zealand's rarest breeding bird species and the rarest tern subspecies in the world.

We were shown video footage of nest predation by cats of nearby Caspian Tern nests, and had explained to us the various other dangers the Fairy Terns face. It wasn't all doom and gloom, though it looks likely that human disturbance will continue to be a problem. The price New Zealand pays for leading such a beach-oriented lifestyle I guess.

We have an exciting range of meetings to look forward to over the next few months from varied locations such as India, Australia, Fiji and California.

(Paul Harrison)

Waikato

Our RR Bev Woolley has finally flown back to the coop and is presently partaking of some deserved rest and relaxation. It will be interesting to hear of her birding exploits in the UK, Ireland and Hawaii.

May's evening meeting was John Rowe's second instalment of his Chilean and Antarctic odyssey with Stella in 1995. While the plants in Chile may have some similarities with those in New Zealand, the birdlife is spectacularly varied.

The May field trip was a dummy run 5-minute bird count at Pukemokemoke Bush reserve near Gordonton. Five members attended on a perfect day. 19 bird species were seen or heard during and between the five counts, including NZ Pigeon and Eastern Rosella, and most of the common passerines. This activity was a prelude to a proposed 5-minute bird count for DoC on Mt Karioi, near Raglan. This was done in good weather in July, with two members attending. While bird numbers were far lower than Pukemokemoke, the view from the top was superb. Feral goats were seen chainsawing the scrub on top, though.

June's evening meeting was spent "visiting" Raoul Island with Hugh Clifford. He had managed to land on this splendid island in the Kermadec group for a short time last summer. That time was packed with activities like beach patrolling, tramping and birdwatching. We were privileged to share Hugh's Raoulian experiences!

The winter census at Kawhia and Aotea Harbours was not without its difficulties, but was completed (just) on the

day by eleven members. Kawhia provided a record 47 Royal Spoonbills, although they were too far away to spot colour bands. Other colour-banded birds were a Pied Stilt and five Black/hybrid Stilts. Speaking of banded birds, two Banded Rails were seen at the Oparau River, along with a Cattle Egret. There was a good count of 165 godwits at Aotea Harbour. Thanks to Trevor Taylor and Bruce Postill (DoC) who supplied the boats.

July's evening meeting found us chilled out in Antarctica. Rob Harcourt, a seal biologist, showed excellent slides of the Adelie Penguins, their behaviour and breeding biology. Not much can be said about the latter in print, but suffice to say that it rivals the Stitchbird's!

Beach patrols have turned up only low numbers of seabirds - only three from 30 kms of patrolling. These were a Blue Penguin, Buller's/Black-browed Mollymawk and a Cape Pigeon.

Grey-faced Petrel work at Mt Maunganui and the adjacent island of Motuotau continues unabated for the 1996 season, with the first bird from the island of Kauwahaia, on Auckland's west coast, being recaptured - on Motuotau. Hugh Clifford and his fellow Pterodromaphiles have also been banding diving petrels. The work will be continuing through 1996.

Recent bird sightings include a Brown Skua at Kawhia Beach on 16 June, while on the same day 41 Cattle Egrets were seen swimming in a paddock near Ngaroto! Along with the escalating water levels in the Waikato, coot numbers are up - 14 in May, 50 in July, levelling out slightly in August. A New Zealand Falcon was seen in late May at Raglan, and a Black Stilt with 20-30 Pied Stilts was also there on 22-23 June. An estimated 100-200 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were reported from Horsham Downs just north of Hamilton in May, along with three Tui in July. Also in July was a Tui at the Te Rapa dairy factory - a spy from the Tui Milk Company? Thanks to all the contributors of these sightings. Bev will return to these pages next issue.

(Paul Cuming)

Hawkes Bay

May saw Hawkes Bay members meeting up with members of the Taupo Forest and Bird Society at Ahuriri. We walked around the reserve where waterfowl were abundant as it was the duckshooting season. Dabchicks were seen on the Westshore Lagoon. A walk along the Embankment Road to the Southern Marsh produced Royal Spoonbills, while other species seen included Banded Dotterels, Pied Stilts and godwits.

In June we carried out winter censuses of Ahuriri and Porangahau Estu-

aries together with the Royal Spoonbill census. 27 spoonbills were counted at Ahuriri and one at Porangahau. A Gull-billed Tern was once again recorded and six Red-necked Stilts were seen at Porangahau.

A field trip in July to look for Black-fronted Terns proved fruitless. A White Heron and a Little Egret were observed at East Clive, and six Spotted Shags were seen roosting in the sewer outfall. The day was cold and windy so perhaps the Black-fronted Terns were sheltering elsewhere.

(Christine McRae)

Taranaki

Over the past three months we have had records of a Royal Spoonbill repeatedly in the Waitara-Mokau area since May. Two Cattle Egrets were seen twice near Waitara but there have not been any more records of our two Rooks.

Good numbers of the following have also been seen - seven pigeons on the Pouakai Ranges, 19 Pied Stilts at Waiongana River mouth near New Plymouth, 20 kingfishers at Oakura Beach, and 40 NZ Scaup, four Coots and 184 Canada Geese at Lake Mangamahoe near New Plymouth. We have also had three Fernbirds, a White Heron and a Little Egret near Mokau.

On one of the Sugar Loaf Islands around 47 Grey-faced Petrel burrows appear to have been cleaned out for this year's nesting season. They are mostly under karo.

(Erika Woodger)

Canterbury

Our June meeting was the region's AGM, and was followed by a collection of Don Hadden's usual excellent slides, this time on a visit to Chatham Island, concentrating on Frances Schmechel's Chatham Island Oystercatcher study. In July Chris Robertson filled us in on the plight of the world's albatrosses as part of his journey around the country, while in August Sue Waugh told us about her albatross work on Campbell Island.

June's field trip was our winter wader count and Royal Spoonbill census. A highlight were Lake Ellesmere's Red-necked Stilts, all in breeding plumage. A stunning July day was put on for the Ashburton Lakes survey. Cancelled last year due to heavy snow, this year's cold conditions meant that all of the smaller lakes were frozen solid, but participants were rewarded by birds in stunningly beautiful winter wonderland conditions. A disappointing turnout for the August field trip to look behind the scenes at the Canterbury Museum meant that participants were able to look closely at the museum's excellent collection of study skins, including birds collected as early as 1850 by some of the great names of early New Zealand ornithology - Pycroft, Stead and Buller for example - as well

as type specimens and a surprising collection of overseas skins.

Our NZ Scaup and coot survey continues monthly, and other wetland and wading birds are of course starting to nest.

Recent reports include six Far-eastern Curlews in autumn at the Ashley Estuary, dropping to one over winter, two Little Terns, apparently commuting between the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Lake Forsyth. Lake Ellesmere produced a Greenshank and 24 Pacific Golden Plovers and the Ashburton Rivermouth had a Grey-tailed Tattler. Peter Langlands reports a Soft-plumaged Petrel off the coast near Timaru, around 40 Mottled Petrels off Oamaru and one of Sue Waugh's colour-dyed Black-browed Mollymawks out from Otago Harbour. Most exciting was a Laysan Albatross 30 miles off Cape Kidnappers, confirmed by John Warham - the first sighting since Captain Cook's day! Cattle Egrets arrived en masse but have since seemingly vanished, a Brown Creeper was well out of range at Woodend Lagoon in July, and Lake Forsyth has had a record 81 Great Crested Grebes.

(Sheila Petch)

Southland

In July, Southland had its worst spell of cold weather ever recorded. A heavy snowfall, followed by nine days of record frosts, deprived many birds of their food source. Large tracts of the estuary were frozen, and the blanket of frozen snow affected pasture birds severely. Hardest hit seem to have been Black-billed Gulls and Spur-winged Plovers, with large numbers of the latter being reported by farmers. Three of our junior members cycled the 27 km from Winton to Invercargill and counted 244 dead Black-billed Gulls. They were attracted to the only bit of clear ground, the road, and quickly became casualties. Some cannibalism was reported.

In the city people reported strange bird behaviour, with large numbers of birds visiting bird tables and some species that may not have been there before, including Song Thrushes, Tui and Bellbirds, and a harrier. We are not expecting any long term consequences, although Cattle Egrets might think twice about migrating south for the winter in future. Beach patrols have continued on a weekly basis, although the winter, as usual, is not very rewarding. It is pleasing to note that Southland maintained its rightful place at the head of the birds per kilometre table for 1995.

We have noted for the first time a small number of overwintering spoonbills.

(Lloyd Esler)

Chatham Islands

Winter has provided some interesting birding in the Chatham Islands. In late

May large numbers of fledgling Sooty Shearwaters came up on beaches, and in early July large numbers of diving petrels washed ashore (one patrol of 5 km turned up 29 birds), low but regular numbers of Pitt Island Shags are found, and one Chatham Island Mollymawk was found on a South Coast beach.

Eight Cattle Egrets were present at the time of writing, they travel widely across the island to feed, being seen from Henga to Owenga, to well down the South Coast.

During a boat trip across the Pitt Strait on 2 June, two White-capped Mollymawks, a Chatham island Mollymawk, four giant petrels, 12 Cape Pigeons, 6 diving petrels and two Grey-backed Storm Petrels were seen.

Winter has seen passerines forming large flocks, in particular Starling and Silvereye flocks of 400-500 birds. Whilst on the Sisters Islands (12 km to the north) in June, a small flock of 8-12 Redpolls was observed commuting between the main island and this small offshore island. The birds would turn up on the island an hour or so after first light, they would remain all day feeding, and were seen flying towards main chatham at dusk.

(Mike Bell)

What's On

Northland/Far North

12 September

evening meeting, Education Advisory Service, Alexander Street, Whangarei.

Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

10 October - evening meeting.

19 October - Wetland birds survey, Mangakahia R.

Ph. Peter Anderson (09) 436 0155.

19-20 & 26-28 October, 2-3 November - NZ Dotterel Survey.

Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

14 November - evening meeting.

17 November

Whangarei/Kaipara Harbour census.

Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954,

Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

30 Nov-1 Dec

Far North harbour census.

Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988,

Janet Snell (09) 409 8892

Monthly beach patrols of Dargaville beaches (Prue Cozens (09) 437 0127), 90 Mile Beach and Karikari (Isobela Godbert (09) 407 8058, John Dawn (09) 407 8653) and the east coast (Jean Hawken (09) 438 1985, Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076).

Auckland

28 September

Cornwall Park survey.

Ph. Doug Booth (09) 478 3027.

White-fronted Tern colony survey.

Ph. Lauren Alston & Ted Kitching (09) 575 7413.

1 October

evening meeting, Auckland Museum (West

Door). Predators and combating them.

Ph. Doug Booth (09) 478 3027.

6 October

beach patrol, Muriwai.

Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5537.

22 October

evening meeting, Clive Minton on waders.

Labour Weekend

National survey of New Zealand Dotterel.

Ph. John Dowding (09) 418 4295.

2 November

Forest birds, Whangateau to Dome Valley.

Ph. Chris Bindon (09) 836 6163.

5 November

evening meeting, Waitakeres birds.

10 November

beach patrol, Muriwai.

Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5537.

17 November

Firth of Thames census.

Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

24 November

6 monthly survey, Tiritiri Matangi Island.

Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5537.

24 November

Manukau/Kaipara Harbour census.

Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

3 December

evening meeting, Tiritiri Matangi Island.

8 December

beach patrol, Muriwai.

Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5537.

4-11 January

Kaipara Field Study Course.

Ph. Gwenda Pulham (09) 480 5535.

South Auckland

Waikato

18 September

evening meeting, DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Fairy Terns in Northland.

Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

22 September

Karioi bird counts.

Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891

16 October

evening meeting, NZ Dotterels at Opoutere.

19 October

Miranda: welcome to the birds.

Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

Bay of Plenty

8 September

White Island on the "Island Princess", with possible landing.

Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

18-20 October

Miranda Naturalists' Trust weekend.

Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

17 November

Summer wader census.

Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406 for Tauranga area, Malcolm Hutton (07) 312 4360 for Ohope.

7 December

Christmas barbecue. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406.

8 December

Blue Ducks and Weka near Opotiki.

Ph. Bill Sloan (07) 315 7489.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Taranaki

Manawatu

Wanganui

Hawkes Bay

15 September

Lake Tutira. All activities,

ph. Christine McRae (06) 879 9136.

13 October

Lawrence Hut and Blowhard Bush.

9 November

Ahuriri Lagoon census.

10 November

Porangahau census.

8 December

Christmas barbecue.

Wairarapa

12 September

evening meeting, St John's rooms, Greytown. Nest and breeding.

Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

9 October

evening meeting, Matthew Lark's Radio Ornithology.

13 October

Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre.

Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

14 November

evening meeting, Plumage and sexual dimorphism.

23 November

Black-fronted Dotterels on the east coast. Ph. Colin Scadden.

7 December

Lake Wairarapa and Christmas barbecue. Ph. Colin Scadden.

Wellington

7 October

evening meeting, DoC Conservation Sciences Centre, First Floor, 58 Tory Street. Nga Manu Sanctuary. Ph. Gavin Woodward (04) 382 8297.

4 November

evening meeting, current DoC Threatened Species Unit work.

2 December

evening meeting, Members' Projects night.

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Mapping scheme - Hugh Roberston (04) 385 8407.

Karori reservoir - Colin Miskelly (04) 472 5821 (work).

Nelson

Marlborough

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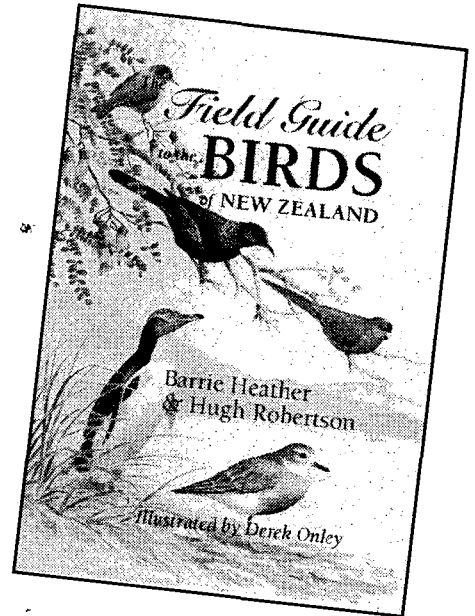
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Canterbury

21 September
Tumbledown Bay, Banks Peninsula.
Ph. Jill West (03) 337 1151.

30 September
evening meeting, Middleton Grange School,
Acacia Ave, Riccarton.
Shining Cuckoo study. Ph. Sheila Petch
(03) 348 1889.

4 November
evening meeting, South Island Kokako.

15-17 November
weekend field trip to Kaikoura - seabirds,
wadens and other.
Ph. Tony Crocker (03) 352 4530.

25 November
evening meeting, Antipodes Islands.

30 November
summer wader count.
Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 389 1889.

West Coast

July 96 - June 97
Weka road kill survey. Representative samples for each month, including status of dead birds, presence of dwellings, other road kills and vegetation types. Casual information welcome. Information to Bruce Menteth, P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki.

Otago

21 August
evening meeting, Otago Art Society building, corner of Great King and Albany Streets. South African birds.
Ph. Peter Schweigman (03) 455 2790.

12 October
Yellow-eyed Penguin count.
Ph. John Darby (03) 476 1676.

16 October - evening meeting, Mallards and Grey Ducks.

10 November
Summer wader count.
Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

Southland

18 September
evening meeting, Southland Museum classroom. Kakadu National Park. Ph. Lloyd Esler (03) 217 9060.

Beach patrols
most Friday evenings.
Ph. Lloyd Esler.
Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern survey- details TBA. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE IS 10th NOVEMBER