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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.

Please note the change in the Editor's address, phone number and email address at the head of this edition of *OSNZ News*

Kaipara Field Study Course - 4-10 January 1997

A large flock of post Christmas-feeding ornithologists gathered at Wellsford for the first summer field course in many a year. Around eighty members flew in from as far away as Dunedin and Punakaiki, including six junior members.

Rodney College served as the central roost at night, while dispersal to various activities described below occurred each morning, sometimes in darkness.

After each day's banding, counting, note-taking, boating and driving, the weary but happy campers returned to the feeding grounds, where we were fed by able Mo and her willing band of helpers.

At the end of most days were talks which covered the following subjects -

- New Zealand Dotterels, by John Dowding

- Wader censuses in the Auckland area, and a predation video, by Dick Veitch

- Cannon-netting and Arctic migrant waders, with accompanying video by Adrian Riegen. Also the results of the Kaipara Harbour census

- The history of Albertland, by Tony Moore

- The Pureora Forest predation control programme, by Hazel Speed

These talks were well received, and thanks go to all the people above.

Groups each morning were deployed to various sites around the Kaipara Harbour, where the following activities took place -

- New Zealand Dotterel catching with John Dowding

- Passerine mist netting with Stephen Davies

- Tern and gull banding with Tony Habraken

- Wader mist netting with Stephen Davies and Adrian Riegen

- Photography with Dick Veitch and Julia Brooke-White

- Kaipara wader census with Adrian Riegen

- Record-keeping and land bird counting with Michael Taylor and Dick Veitch

- Beach patrolling with Graeme Taylor

- Kiwi spotting with Chris Bindon

These activities are described in more detail below. Activities which were cancelled due to Cyclone Drena were Friday's cannon netting at Jordan's farm near Kaukapakapa, and Saturday's post course field trips to Motuora and Tiritiri Matangi Islands.

To those who made the course so enjoyable, a big thank you. Especially to Gwenda Pulham, who has spent literally years organising this summer course. I hope she is now enjoying a well-deserved rest!

Gwenda was ably supported by Dick Veitch and Simon Chamberlin, along with Tom and Hazel Harty, some local members and... of course... the caterers. I fervently hope that this course has rekindled a spark of interest to hold summer camps regularly again, as they can be very rewarding and successful.

PAUL CUMING

Beach Patrol - Muriwai Beach, 5 January

I enjoyed the beach patrolling on Muriwai Beach, seeing the vast sand dunes and vegetation - completely different from our west coast beaches. Winds and driving sand made it impossible on occasion to see some birds. We leap-frogged along the beach, covering two kilometres each time, after which we were picked up by DoC vehicles with our bags of birds. My highlight of the beach patrol was finding a Long-tailed Skua.

STUART JENKINS

(Northland)

A beach patrol on Muriwai Beach was to be a great start to the week at Kaipara. My find for the day was picking up a bird and having an egg drop from the body. There was no doubt that the egg belonged to the bird - a White-headed Petrel, caught out well away from her breeding grounds. The last few kilometres, to the foot of Papakanui Spit, we did by vehicle, then returned to the starting point to meet up with the southern group and sort our birds out. Totals were -

Blue Penguin	5
Wandering Albatross	1
Grey-headed Mollymawk	1
White-capped Mollymawk	5
Grey-faced Petrel	3
White-headed Petrel	4
White-chinned Petrel	1
Mottled Petrel	4
Buller's Shearwater	3
Sooty Shearwater	43
Short-tailed Shearwater	3
Flesh-footed Shearwater	1
Fluttering Shearwater	1
Broad-Billed Prion	2
Salvin's Prion	1
Common Diving Petrel	3 (2 juv.)
Australasian Gannet	26
Pied Shag	1
Mallard	1
Long-tailed Skua	1
Total	110

ROS BATCHELER
(Wellington)

Passerine Mist Netting, 6 January

The morning started early (about 4.30 am). There were five of us - Tom and Hazel Harty, Troy Makan, Stephen Davies and me. We arrived at Becroft's orchard and carried the mist nets through the darkness.

With freezing feet we set up the nets between the rows of peach trees. By this time the sun had risen and our feet started defrosting, and some of the later risers arrived - just in time to set up the second mist net. After that we went and checked the first net for birds. When we got within sight of it we saw a large bird hanging in it. When we got close it turned out to be a Kookaburra, which, hanging in the net, looked very comical. Stephen quickly removed the bird but was wary of the beak. A myna was also in the net but was almost left behind.

Later that day a Goldfinch was predated by a cat while still in the net. Two Eastern Rosellas were also caught in the net and gave Stephen and Tom no end of trouble. In the end we banded mynas, Silvereyes, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds and Chaffinches to name a few.

I would like to thank Stephen Davies for showing us how to set up the nets and band birds and everything else.

TOM BUCKLEY
(Waikato)



Kookaburra caught in mist-net, Becroft's Orchard near Wellsford 6-1-97.

Photo: Tom A. Buckley

Kaipara Harbour Survey, 6 January

Graeme Taylor led a group of seven people to count Grey-faced Petrel burrows on Moturemu Island. These people were Stella and John Rowe, Phillip and Karl Baker, Tom and Hazel Harty and Troy Makan.

We had a great day counting 307 active burrows, and banded two late chicks, as well as a bit of weed control - more needs to be done.

The boat trip back to the mainland was a bit of a disaster, as it was low tide and we couldn't find the channel. We had to wait for a couple of hours for the tide to rise. It was 9 pm by the time we got home. We had tea and went to bed. Overall though it was a great day.

TROY MAKAN
(Rotorua)

Our section of the harbour survey was done by boat. Derek and I left from Pahi in a DoC boat, skippered by Keith from DoC Whangarei. We explored inlets from Page Point to Opu Creek and Whakapirau Creek, finding a Black Shag colony in this area. There are some DoC reserves in the area which Keith had not seen from the water, so he was able to photograph this aspect.

We then crossed the Arapaoa River to Puriri Point, visiting Raepere Creek, Tahupo Creek and Kirikiri Inlet. Lunch was eaten while we counted the Bar-tailed Godwits at a wader roost at the end of Karakanui Road.

With the falling tide we returned to Pahi. Overall 22 species of birds were seen, including South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Banded Dotterel, Pied Stilt, White-fronted Tern, Kereru, NZ Kingfisher, Grey Duck, Little, Black and Pied Shag, Lesser Knot and Caspian Tern.

ROS BATCHELER
(Wellington)

Gull and Tern banding, 6 January

On 6 January I went tern banding for the first time. We drove to Shelly Beach. From there we got in a speed boat and went to Rat Island. I wonder why it's called that?

I was the last to get to the island, so that by the time I got there the rest of the group had already set up a little yard of sacks tied to plastic posts. There were two sacks at the end, at each side, to close when the chicks had run into the yard.

Two people were chosen to shut the flaps and two were chosen to stand at the back of the yard to stop the chicks jumping over. The remaining people were to round up the chicks. I was one of them.

My group went out to herd the chicks in. It's a bit like herding cows - you push them all into one group and stop them from

getting out of it. Slowly the chicks made their way to the yard. A few escaped. Flapping and squawking and trying to fly, they went into the yard.

Then the banding started. Me, Rosemary Heather and Edwin Darlow had the job of carrying the chicks from the yard to be banded. Some of the chicks from the yard were nearly large enough to fly - they were trying to anyway. Baby gulls are quite placid, whereas Caspian Terns are vicious!

One of the Black-billed Gull chicks was banded already so we let it go. We also let go all the tiny chicks.

The man who held the chicks held them gently but carefully, so they couldn't peck him. I got pecked a few times.

I thought that banding looked easy, so I asked to have a go. It was hard! I had to squeeze a steel ring onto a chick's leg with pliers. The man laughed and called me a "Lily-wrist", then he clipped the band on, no problem! I should call him "Flax-Wrist"!

We packed up the yard. Now the tide was out so the speed boat couldn't get in, so he stopped on the other side of the island. We had to wade out in knee-deep water to get to him. On the way home I thought about my day, and that banding was good fun. I'd love to go again!

SUNKITA HOWARD
(West Coast)

During the two months prior to the course, all breeding sites were monitored to accommodate a banding programme during the week of the course. The early November start of Black-billed Gulls at Waikiri Creek was washed out, but they conveniently shifted south to Rat Island about two weeks later. Alongside were Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns, Caspian Terns and Black-backed Gulls. The Caspian Terns were well on their way by 30 November, but often have an extended season, and so provided a suitable species to band if all else failed.

Meanwhile at Papakanui Spit a huge gathering of White-fronted Terns had started nesting. On 30 November the colony had 569 birds sitting and later Doug Campbell (DoC spit warden) reported an increase of at least another hundred pairs. Both sites seemed set for a successful breeding season and perfect for banding.

On 2 January Rat Island had suffered some losses of White-fronted Terns, Black-billed and Red-billed Gulls, with some early chicks ready to fly. Papakanui Spit was a hive of activity but unfortunately most chicks were still too young and not yet creching, and many birds were still sitting and in the process of hatching. Deciding to withdraw from this remote place eased the pressure on the logistics of getting people there.

On Sunday 5 January the planned assault on Rat Island was cancelled due to high winds and unsafe boating conditions. The alternative arrangement was to head to Waikiri Creek where a small number of Caspian Terns had renested. The eighteen



Tony Habraken and team corraling gull & tern chicks - Rat Island, Kaipara Field Course.

Photo: Paul Cuming

willing helpers (including some local press reporters) descended on the tiny sand island, but conditions were far from ideal, with sand storms prevailing. We gathered up only the eight largest chicks, sheltering them from the elements as they were banded. A New Zealand Dotterel nest was observed by all before we departed for a quick look at Port Albert.

The remainder of the day was spent walking up the Mangawhai Estuary and exploring the adjacent sand dunes. As we approached the great sandy desert the dunes rose in stature and towered above us as the gusty wind swirled sand clouds around their peaks, through valleys and around a few bare legs. We then spotted Lawrence of Arabia and a helper - no, not a mirage; they were there fixing a fence on top of a dune. Fearing the thundering hooves of camels we approached, only to find two DoC workers tending a Caspian Tern colony high atop the dunes.

We continued walking the lowlands around small oases and amongst flocks

comprising 400 Bar-tailed Godwits, 240 Lesser Knots, 5 Turnstones, 3 Red-necked Stints, 10+ New Zealand Dotterels, 3+ Wrybills and 3 Banded Dotterels which roost among the dunes. The elusive Fairy Terns were out there somewhere but a distant fleeting glimpse was the best we could do. The sighting of a colour banded N.Z. Dotterel and Black-backed Gull reminded us of how the day had begun.

On Monday 6 January the winds had abated overnight enough to get across to Rat Island. The seventeen strong team gathered at Shelly Beach and was ferried across by local fisherman Don Cooper. The expected catch here required the setting up of a corral on the beach front, and, with ample helpers, the muster quickly gathered in 5 Black-billed Gulls, 10 Red-billed Gulls, 4 White-fronted Terns and 44 Caspian Tern chicks - a nice sample of good banding age.

The opportunity to compare the two gull species in the hand was not missed. All birds were metal banded, and colour bands added

to the Black-billed Gulls as part of the South Auckland study of the species. Many thanks to Don Cooper for his shuttle service, Gwenda Pulham for arranging for the site on Rat Island to be cleared of vegetation the previous autumn and winter and monitoring the pre-breeding activity, David Crockett and Lorna Simpkin who kindly delayed their banding programme to fit in with the field study course and Graeme Taylor for his valued experience and assistance, plus all who participated in the banding days.

As a postscript, the effects of Cyclone Drena on the colonies were: 8 young Caspian Terns at Waikiri Creek have been sighted on the island, the White-fronted Tern chicks at Papakanui Spit took to the sand dunes and most had fledged by 26 January. No visits have been made to Rat Island, but we hope it was not submerged and that the mangroves gave them enough protection.

TONY HABRAKEN

Photography, 6 January

After an interesting morning learning about the techniques of bird photography, four of us had the opportunity to photograph Caspian Terns and New Zealand Dotterels from a hide.

The hide was quickly positioned and the birds returned as soon as the rest of the group had left. After about ten to fifteen minutes, the hide was treated as part of the landscape. It was wonderful watching the terns going about their daily lives in a perfectly normal manner; coming and going from the colony, fighting for space and bringing small fish in their bills to feed their chicks. Being able to record bird behaviour on film keeps this experience alive, and has the potential to discover new facts about the bird that is being photographed.

IAN WILSON
(Northland)

Fairy Terns, 7 January

On 7 January, while participating in the harbour survey from a boat on the Oruawharo River, we saw three Fairy Terns sitting on the mudbank.

We watched the birds, through binoculars and telescope, for about fifteen minutes from a distance of ten metres. All these birds were colour-banded; two were adults and one a juvenile. We had excellent views of the bright yellow bills and legs of the adults, and their black caps. We could clearly see that there was no black streak between the eye and the bill. The juvenile, about twelve months old, had a dusky bill and legs, and a speckled cap. An unforgettable sight of a rare bird in New Zealand. We were amazed to learn subsequently that the three birds were unrelated to each other.

DON & MURIEL STRACY
(Wellington)

Record Keeping and Land Bird Counting, 7 January

We started off the day with some tips and know-how from Michael Taylor and Dick Veitch. Particularly useful were Michael's examples of his record books over the years. Later, we took to the field, to Dome Valley, to put the theory into practice.

However it was a little late in the day, and State Highway One was quite close. Nevertheless, close to the Dome, the presence of Tomtits was noted and a male was sighted. 500 metre transects and five minute counts showed Tui, Silvereyes, Chaffinches and Greenfinches to be in the area.

For lunch we proceeded to Gamble's Dam, where the presence of a motor boat, dogs and several decoys was noted, along with a large flock of Welcome Swallows. One Grey Teal was sighted by Chris Bindon.

CATE RYAN & KATHRYN
McKENZIE
(Auckland)

Wader Mist Netting, 8 & 9 January

People who wanted to see the entire process of wader mist netting at night-time set off at 6.45 pm after a rushed meal. Many were not to return until the early hours of the next morning.

We began setting the nets at 7.30 pm on the mudflat on Big Sand Island. The later followers arrived as the last guy was being pushed into place and the nets fully erected. We made camp by the private sand track at Tapora and waited for the dark, high tide and the birds.

Many tried to sleep but their attempts were in vain as story- and joke-telling proved to be easier and more appealing. The third check of the nets proved successful with three godwits, three Banded Dotterels, a SIPO and a Spur-winged Plover. Some people had lost faith beforehand and left before the catch. The next group left after the banding and headed back to Rodney College. Those who braved the entire night got no more birds but had the pleasure of taking part in the smooth, professional dismantling of the nets.

Even though no large numbers of birds were caught, the experience was great and, for most, a new experience. Those who braved the entire night got to bed at 3.30 am on the Thursday. The only trouble was staying awake for the next day's wader census.

FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAM
(Otago)

Wader Census, 8 & 9 January

The tides were the most suitable for this time of the year, but at less than 4.0 metres some tidal flats were still exposed, enabling waders to roost at some places which were difficult to find and count.

The main aim was to teach participants unfamiliar with counting large flocks of birds how to undertake such counts. Summer censuses are usually carried out in November, so knowing what birds are present in January is a bonus, even though no comparable data from other years exist.

By repeating the count on two days, participants were able to visit different places and share their learning and bird counting experience with different people. Of the 56 potential roost sites on the harbour, 22 are covered during the regular censuses and 15 during these censuses.

At least 33,000 waders were present in the harbour, and the large flocks of some species proved to be a challenge to some counters.

DICK VEITCH & ADRIAN RIEGEN

Dotterel Catching

We visited two sites where areas of beach are roped off to indicate nesting birds. At first approach, a pair of Variable Oystercatchers called and displayed, telling a chick to lie low, and us that it was there! The chick was quickly located and then experience told John Dowding where to place his snare - a series of nylon loops attached to a framework buried in the sand. John then stood nearby the chick to attract the parent bird, which passed over the snare and was caught within two minutes. Both parent and chick were weighed, measured and banded, and released with quiet efficiency.

Nearby a New Zealand Dotterel's nest was located with one egg. A few minutes watching the adult bird's behaviour told John that this was the first egg of a clutch and would not be incubated until one or two more eggs were laid, so our activities were not keeping the bird off the nest. Again a snare (this time with slightly smaller loops) was laid near the nest. John then indulged in antics that would confirm to any non-birdwatcher that all ornithologists are mad - crouching and shell tossing to attract the male bird, who was caught within minutes. Measuring confirmed that this was the male, which was banded and data recorded to provide more vital information on a threatened, endemic species. At a second nest on another beach a chick was caught and banded, and on release was seemingly knocked over by the parent as if to say "Next time, be still when I tell you"!

The day was a fascinating one with a chance to see these beautiful birds in the hand and observe something of their breeding behaviour, as well as to experience

the skill and patience of a dedicated ornithologist. We learnt a lot and hopefully the birds will benefit in the long term. Thank you, John.

BRIAN DARLOW
(Christchurch)

Little Barrier Island, 12 January

The Little Barrier Island trip began on Sunday at 6 am sharp from Leigh Wharf. Birds seen from the boat were Cook's and Black Petrels, Flesh-footed, Buller's and Fluttering Shearwaters, gannets and White-faced Storm Petrels.

In the 9 1/2 hours on the island, we saw most of the bird species, including Stitchbird, Saddleback, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Rifleman, Whitehead, Kakariki and Kereru. Others saw Kokako, Cook's Petrel (storm dead near the colony), NZ Robin, plus Brown Kiwi "grubbings". The Kaka near the bunkhouse proved most expensive for some, as camera shutters hardly rested. Their antics were very photogenic!

On the return journey we were rewarded with extreme close-up views of dolphins, some jumping clean out of the sea. Thank you to Adrian Riegen, who filled injured Mel Galbreath's shoes at short notice.

PAUL CUMING

Editor for *Notornis*

Under the new constitution, the Editor's position is no longer an elected position. It is accordingly being advertised as a formal appointment by Council. Members wishing to indicate their interest in editing *Notornis* are asked to notify the Secretary (OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) by 16 May 1997. A job description for the position is available from the Secretary. A PC with wordprocessing software is available for the Editor. The position is an honorary one with a term, to be agreed with Council, of one to three years.

RAEWYN EMPSON
Hon. Secretary

Field Investigation Officer

Members wishing to indicate their interest in the position of Field Investigation Officer are asked to notify the Secretary (OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) by 16 May 1997. This position was established in 1986 and is responsible for coordinating and helping to plan the various projects being carried out by the Society. A job description for the position is available from the Secretary. As with all positions within the society, this is an honorary position, renewable annually.

RAEWYN EMPSON

Hon. Secretary



From the President's Desk

Activities for a new year should have already settled down and new ornithological discoveries continued. A fine overture for the year was the successful field course on the Kaipara Harbour, which managed to negotiate the vagaries of cyclonic weather and have an ornithological experience as well as a good time. The theme of the north will of course continue later in the year with the scientific day and AGM, to be held in Whangarei during Queen's Birthday weekend.

It is also the time of year when reports of the past year's activities are collated for presentation to the membership and your representatives have to account for their stewardship. Overall we are still a small society, which is very dependant on a continuing supply of keen members who are prepared to take on tasks and organise things for the wider membership. Trying to keep a balance between operating as a group, catering for those who wish to conduct bird study on their own, and promoting the results of our activities to, not only our own members, but those of a wider public, is a continuing challenge.

A recent analysis of membership changes over the past eight years (involving hours of meticulous checking by a volunteer) has shown that we are not looking after and retaining our new members. About 30% on average are not remaining members for more than one year, with a trend for this rate to increase. For at least the past eight years the Society has been steadily declining in overall numbers by an average of some 30 individuals a year. It is everyone's responsibility to encourage and look after

other members and to find out what their aspirations are. It is impossible for RRs or Council to anticipate the needs of members if they are not told what they are. What are new members joining for? Is it to learn more about birds? To enjoy the company of others while doing so, or to be entertained? Have *you* helped make your new members welcome and showed them what can be done in your region and in other parts of the country? Maybe there needs to be a new members' column in *OSNZ News* where we can hear about what is needed?

This column then is to ask you to think about what *you* can do to help the Society, its members and the fostering of bird study. There is little reward for doing some of the unsung tasks of the Society, other than the satisfaction of seeing others enjoy themselves in adding to our knowledge of birds. Not all tasks are large and onerous, but they are necessary to ensure that things get done. The task of an RR is probably closest to most members, and I have heard many say that it is too big for one person, or that they do not have the time. Some regions have very successfully developed a group of people who work with the RR and each shoulder a little of the load. It means also that they understand the workings of the region better so that when they spend a short time as RR they are already prepared for the role, knowing also that there is a good team to back them up and share the load. Frankly it is not fair to expect RRs to carry on for years and years doing the job with little support, however much they may profess to enjoy doing so. It means that others in the region are not contributing as they should. Even those who are less active, and may not be able to get out as much, can organise things on the phone to relieve the load for those in the field. It keeps you in contact as well with other people and birding events.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM in Whangarei this year. This is the first time that the AGM has been held north of Auckland and gives members an opportunity to experience the birds of a new area. It means also that within three years the Society has been meeting at the two extreme ends of the country. What a good opportunity to get some dirt on your new Field Guide and visit our friends in remote places. It may surprise some of the locals what new eyes can see in their district. Our grateful thanks to Whangarei for offering and we look forward to a lively weekend. One hopes that cyclones will not be in the offing at that time of year!

C.J.R. Robertson

President

Election of two new Fellows

You will recall that the new constitution passed last year made provision for the Society to have four Fellows appointed and alive at any time. Professor Marples, for many years resident in the UK, was the only Fellow (previously Honorary Life Member) alive at the time of the constitutional change.

I am pleased to be able to announce that Peter Bull (131a Waterloo Road, Lower Hutt) and Graham Turbott (23 Cathedral Place, Parnell, Auckland) were elected as Fellows by Council at the end of 1996 to fill two of the three vacant positions. Both have had distinguished ornithological careers and have contributed greatly to the Society since its inception. A more detailed summation of their contribution will be published in *Notornis* in due course. Happy birding

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

President

Award for David Crockett

For his work in science education and the rediscovery of the Chatham Island Taiko, David Crockett has been awarded the Rutherford Science and Technology Medal. David said he was humbled by the award, which was one of the country's top honours in the science field and is presented by the Royal Society of New Zealand.

David said that rediscovering the Taiko was the pinnacle of his career, but he "had a hunch" there were one or two lost New Zealand birds still to be rediscovered.

He said he saw a hands-on approach as a way to teach science to children. He helped set up science fairs in Northland and worked in science teaching at Auckland College of Education until two years ago. "While my expertise is ornithology, I like to get involved in the whole ecological system of something, such as when you look at mangroves and what makes them survive you also have to look at the fishes, birds and bees that use that too," David said.

David will be presented with his medal by the Governor-General, Sir Michael Hardie-Boys in Auckland on February 28.

MIKE DINSDALE

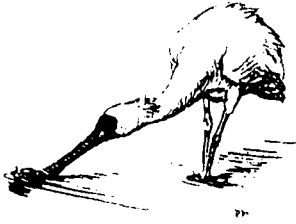
Northern Advocate

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 1997

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 1997. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary. All nominations will be considered by the Awards Committee and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting. A full summary of OSNZ award procedures was published in *OSNZ News* 58 (March 1991).

RAEWYN EMPSON

(Hon. Secretary)



Spoonbill Breeding Success

In previous years the Royal Spoonbills at the Wairau Lagoons, Marlborough, began nesting about mid November - in fact we banded our very first chick in late November 1989 - with the peak nesting in mid December. Usually poor weather conditions cause disruptions to nesting and last chicks fledge in early March.

Traditionally Waitangi Day (6 February) is *the* day that we band chicks, but this season it was almost all over by 23 January. Since the stoat/ferret problem at the colony of a couple of seasons ago, DoC in Blenheim has set about six traps in and around the colony. These they regularly service throughout the season. While out at the colony they do a brief check on the nests etc. and keep me informed.

When numbers of chicks started to drop off and no new nesting was taking place I realised nesting was finishing. What had happened was that there was no bad weather, so the spoonbills had all nested together. The result was that we were able to band just two new birds this season. Added to the birds banded over the last seven seasons there are now 78 colour banded Royal Spoonbills from this colony.

To date there has been a total of 375 sightings of banded Royal Spoonbills from throughout the country. Three we know have died. Of the others, 57 birds have been sighted, which is over 75% return. This breaks down to an average of 6.5 sightings per bird - which is a great effort by OSNZ members.

Although these returns come from 37 locations and were sent in by 54 people, the majority of returns are from about four locations and by about four people.

We suspect that there are a number of sightings of banded spoonbills yet to be reported to the Banding Officer. Please forward them C/o DoC Wellington (P.O. Box 10420). Also if you are out and about and see a Royal Spoonbill, take a second look and check for colour bands. We are particularly keen to get reports from elsewhere. Often three or four birds will drop into an estuary or wetland for a few days before moving on. It's these ones that are particularly valuable, but in fact any and every report is valuable as they are all a part of the big picture.

Finally an update for the young OSNZ members who helped band the spoonbills last year. Thirteen were banded, and of these ten have been seen elsewhere. We have had a total of sixteen sightings of these ten birds

to date. This year Robbie Holdaway, another keen young birder, helped.

BILL CASH

Grey-faced Petrel Project

The sixth year of the OSNZ Waikato Grey-faced Petrel project was completed in January 1997. During this 1996/97 year a further 141 adults and 30 chicks were banded at Mauao (Mount Maunganui) and 390 adults and 85 chicks at Motuotau Island. This brought the totals banded at these two sites since 1990 to 968 adults and 70 chicks at Mauao and 2,130 adults and 397 chicks at Motuotau Island.

The number of chicks banded at Mauao is the highest ever. The percentage of chicks lost there during the rearing period has been dramatically lower in the last two years, when a predator control programme was in operation, than it was in the previous two years without predator control. Motuotau Island has been invaluable as a predator-free site with which to compare the mainland site at Mauao. It was ironic, then, that some time after 19 September 1996 a male stoat found its way to the island, and before it died in a trap between 22 and 26 November 1996 it had killed at least 90 Common Diving Petrels, two White-faced Storm Petrels and a Rock Pigeon. Whether it killed any Grey-faced Petrel chicks is not known for certain, but no dead chicks of this species were seen, and the percentage losses in the study burrows did not show any abnormal increase.

One of the aims of this project is to study movement between colonies. The recapture data for 1996/97 show that twelve birds banded at Mauao were recaptured at Motuotau, two birds banded at Motuotau were recaptured at Mauao, and one bird banded at Whale Island was recaptured at Mauao.

HUGH CLIFFORD

Auckland Black-billed Gulls

This year's breeding season was no easy affair for our Black-billed Gulls, although the predicted spring tides were moderate compared to past seasons. Cyclones Fergus and Drena more than compensated for the lack of them however.

The first good news came from the Kaipara Harbour, where birds had started nesting on 3 November at Waikiri Creek (7 nests). They were soon washed out and the birds then shifted to the more suitable Rat Island 30 kms to the south - the island was so named some years back when rats were discovered there and eradicated soon after. This rather sinister sounding place is a paradise for gulls and terns at this time of

the year. The island consists of a high shelf of mudbank covered in knee high mangrove, with a north-west terraced shellbank shoreline which the mixed colonies set up camp on.

During last autumn-winter weeds were removed from parts of the island, which proved very worthwhile and showed how such action can benefit some bird species. While weeds can help stabilise the shellbanks, they can also dramatically alter the habitat of open spaces required for breeding species such as gulls, terns, dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers. It was therefore most pleasing to see them using the area cleared of vegetation.

As a result there were 17 Black-billed Gull nests alongside c.120 Caspian Tern nests, 190+ White-fronted Tern nests and 7 Red-billed Gull nests, all of which were closely monitored by marauding Black-backed Gulls. While only five Black-billed Gull chicks attained fledging size, they received bands (red on left, metal on right) in the New Year's Honours list for "Services to Ornithology" - the first ever for the species on the Kaipara. Members of the Kaipara Field Study Course partook of the exercise.

There was no breeding recorded from the Manukau Harbour, though small numbers were present throughout the season. They were mainly birds banded yellow-metal, banded at Karaka two years ago.

Mataitai, near Clevedon's Wairoa River, had some breeding activity, but, as in previous years, the ten nests were predated or washed away by Cyclone Drena. Miranda's colony of 130 nests somehow escaped the fury of Cyclone Fergus - the associated tidal height did not eventuate - but Cyclone Drena's impact ten days later was more forceful. The colony was all but wiped out, except those chicks brave enough to ride the tides and the elements. The high seas removed part of the shellbank, leaving a small peak which hardly seemed suitable to protect many chicks but somehow many survived. These were honoured for their display of courage, bravery and survival skills, each receiving green over metal on left.

To compare with the two previous seasons, 115 nests for 233 chicks (Karaka 1995) and 106 nests for 165 chicks (Miranda 1996), then from 130 nests, of which some were just hatched and others still incubating eggs, which stood no chance in the cyclonic conditions, the 0.89 chicks per nest was still a good result.

Other interesting details to emerge this season were the activities of yellow-metal banded birds. Some were seen copulating as early as 19 October, as were other, unbanded pairs. Egg laying was calculated back from hatching at around 24 November, yet no yellow-metal birds had laid until about 14 December (also calculated back from hatching date). This was three weeks after the majority of the colony had nested. There were only four pairs of yellow-metal that bred. All of these hatched chicks. No banded birds were seen with unbanded mates.

Yellow-metal birds were not tolerated amongst the breeding activity, and only when some chicks were running freely did it become apparent what part these birds played, as "colony cleaners", picking up scraps including unattended eggs in fleeting raids through the colony. Food samples were collected from chicks which regurgitated recent meals. Worms or polychaetes, flounder and shrimps were easily recognised, along with other fishy items yet to be identified. I'd like to thank everyone who was present and assisted during the presentations of awards this season, and hope you all keep a close eye on the movements of the species in the years to come and record any colour band sightings. Details of any sightings can be sent to the Banding Office or myself.

TONY HABRAKEN

Chatham Island Terns

White-fronted Terns breed at a number of sites in the Chatham Islands, but during the winter (April to August) there are very few terns present. Presumably these birds are over-wintering in New Zealand. However New Zealand colour bands have been recorded in Australia during winter and it is possible that Chatham birds are going that far also. The Chatham Island OSNZ members have begun a study on the dispersal of White-fronted Terns from the island. We now need all Society members to contribute to ensure its success.

During the breeding season a number of field trips were carried out. 150 tern chicks were banded with a yellow plastic flag on the right leg and a metal band on the left. It is planned to band further chicks in future years. Since the banding, local members have already recorded several flagged terns, both at their colonies and at roost sites away from the colonies. We are relying on all New Zealand members to check carefully any flocks of terns for flagged birds once these disperse from the island.

Sightings should be sent to the Banding Office, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington and should include accurate location and date of sighting.

MIKE & DAVE BELL

Kakapo update - January 1997

Fifty Kakapo are known to survive - 19 females and 31 males. Apart from three hatched on the islands, all have been relocated since 1975 to offshore islands in order to protect them from introduced mammalian predators - no natural population is known to remain. No adult mortality is known to have occurred during the last three years.

Four birds were moved off Little Barrier Island during the 1996 winter. Two males (the presumed mates of two females who

produced infertile clutches in 1995) have traditionally hogged the much-prized Summit track and bowl systems, usually visited by females in a breeding year. They were exiled to an island off southern Stewart Island to sit out the breeding season, contemplating their suspected infertility. Their fertility will be assessed over the next two booming seasons, after which a decision will be made on how best to use them. Two others, a male and female, were moved to Maud Island, since they had proved to be unmanageable on the larger and much more rugged Little Barrier.

Also on Maud, five year old Hoki (the only captive Kakapo and the only surviving female hatched since 1981) has been encouraged to leave her pen in order to socialise with the seven free-living Kakapo, and to mate when she is ready. She now feeds from her feeding station within her pen most nights but generally roosts outside by day. So far, she has explored some hundreds of metres beyond her pen.

Kakapo appear to breed naturally at about five-yearly intervals, in synchrony with the masting (heavy fruiting) of certain native plants. Booming has now begun on both Little Barrier and Codfish Islands, so hopes of breeding occurring in 1997 are high.

Because kiore are present on two of the three Kakapo islands, it is essential that we are able to quickly and safely control them near nests. Field trials indicate that these rats just love white chocolate, so by incorporating it into a toxic bait and redesigning our bait stations, we have increased many-fold the "bait take". Hopefully the heavy loss of Kakapo chicks to kiore will now be a thing of the past.

Special heat pads have been developed to maintain incubation/brooding temperatures in nests should the female not return. This gives a buffer of several hours. "Loggers" have been upgraded and increased in number, so that if a female is logged at a track and bowl system, her precise location will be fixed daily by triangulation; if she has not moved for a specified number of days, she will be checked visually to determine if she has a nest.

Recent research has entailed taking blood samples and swabs to allow genetic analysis, in order to determine relatedness of all our birds and to be able to identify individuals from moulted feathers. We aim to establish health norms through determination of normal levels of various blood components, as well as micro-organisms and parasites. Kakapo were found to be remarkably free of pathogens. A technique known as "doubly treated water" has been used to measure energy expenditure, and preliminary results show that non-breeding Kakapo have an exceptionally low field energy expenditure.

Additional research includes developing a means of collecting and assessing Kakapo sperm; diet studies, the aim of which is to spot any change in diet which might be associated with - and perhaps trigger -

breeding; hormone therapy - initially using Mallards - with key programme goals of inducing non-productive females to breed and inducing those that do to do so more often; studies on the birds' scent discrimination and hearing; and plant phenology - a heavy crop of rimu fruit is developing on Codfish at present and should be available to the birds from late March/early April. In 1992 - the last time that rimu fruited there heavily - Kakapo breeding failed when the crop aborted just prior to ripening. Although a significant amount of fruit has fallen in recent months, the crop that remains is a heavy one.

contributed by DON MERTON

Live Sooty Tern

Most records of Sooty Terns in mainland New Zealand have been of dead individuals found in the course of the beach patrol scheme. The recovery, on 11 January 1997, at the coastal town of Waitara, just north of New Plymouth, of a live Sooty Tern in exhausted condition therefore seems worthy of mention.

The bird was taken to Pouakai Zoo Park where it unfortunately died later that day. Cyclone Drena passed southward through Taranaki on the day that this bird was found. That cyclone had previously moved through a region to the north of New Zealand where Sooty Terns occur. The Waitara bird had probably accompanied it to Taranaki.

DAVID MEDWAY

Migrating Oystercatchers

On three occasions during December 1996/January 1997 South Island Pied Oystercatchers have been seen flying purposefully along the Waikato west coast. On 29 December John and Stella Rowe were out on Albatross Point, a large headland jutting far out to sea, south-west of the entrance to Kawhia Harbour. They were investigating possible White-fronted Tern breeding colonies which had been sighted on the cliffs from the air, as part of the national survey. There was a strong easterly wind. Between about 10.00 am and 2.00 pm they saw four flocks of South Island Pied Oystercatchers flying north over the point. The size of the flocks, from smallest to largest, was 11, 21, 30, 34, making a total of 96 birds. These flocks were flying over the land, which is a considerable height above the sea.

On 8 January Hugh Clifford and Clinton Care were patrolling Taharoa Beach, the northern end of which is about 4 km from Albatross Point. They were on the beach from 10.50 am to 4.50 pm, walking its full

7.5 km length (and back!) and finding plenty of beachcast seabirds. It was a fine, sunny day with a very light onshore (westerly) breeze. Between 11.15 am and 2.30 pm, nine flocks of oystercatchers were seen flying north along the beach, the size of the flocks (from smallest to largest) being 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 18, 19, 85. There were 159 birds in total. Most flocks flew almost exactly along the tideline, and from almost ground level to an estimated 30 metres above ground level. The main exception to this was the large flock of 85, which was above the sandhills back from the sea, and estimated to be more than 60 metres above the ground.

The hinterland along this beach is quite low, but at each end it rises to higher hills which end in cliffs at the coast. We were not near either end of the beach when these flocks went past, so were unable to observe whether they rose over the hills or whether they flew at a low level over the sea around the coastal cliffs. From the Rowes' observation on 29 December we know that at least some flocks fly over the top of the cliffs, rather than over the sea at the bottom.

On 23 January the beach was again patrolled, this time by Hugh Clifford, Jan Hoverd, Laurie Hoverd and Bev Woolley, from 10.50 am to 3.55 pm. The day varied from bright overcast to sunny, with a very light onshore breeze. At about 2.30 pm a flock of seven SIPO was flying north along the beach in the same purposeful manner as those on 8 January. No other flocks were seen this day. South Island Pied Oystercatchers do not normally frequent this beach, which presumably offers little in the way of feeding habitat. However on this day there was one bird roosting, possibly having dropped out of a migrating flock to rest, before resuming its journey.

We do not know whether the birds observed on these occasions were planning to visit Kawhia Harbour, or continue further north. If they were planning to visit or stay at Kawhia, which contains extensive suitable habitat, they could have saved a lot of time and energy by taking a shortcut overland from Taharoa Beach - SIPO are welcome to contact us for details.

HUGH CLIFFORD

"Toucan" sightings wanted

In October 1996, I was at Te Pahi in the Far North, working with a group of conservation volunteers. Our task was to cut wilding pines, plant (somewhat late) pohutukawa trees, clean up the beaches and generally leave the area in a better environmental condition than when we found it. When thus not engaged in the above country pursuits, we fished, tramped and indulged in jugged hare.

On the third day, two volunteers from Dargaville returned from a day's work highly amused by a "thing" they had found amongst the pine trees, gorse and *Hakea*. It

had been dead several months, was dried out, but had all the necessary accoutrements to make it identifiable. My reaction was similar to Paul Cuming's when he had a similar encounter with the "thing". What can the creature be that looks like a cross between a miniature scarecrow and a toucan? A huge bill, long legs and a long tail with bars underneath. There was a distinctly predatory feel about this unearthly looking creature. Then it came to me, just the head in the Collins guide - yes, it was a Channel-billed Cuckoo. Unbelievable! I had never in my life seen anything like it. It was all there apart from the flesh. Only the third or possibly fourth solid record. I was tickled pink!

When I got to the Department of Conservation office in Whangarei a few days later, I went straight to Ray Pierce's office, holding the bird behind my back. "Ray", I said, "what is the T. Rex of the cuckoo world?" I should have known he would get it first time off. Not for nothing is he on the Rare Birds Committee.

I am now in the process of writing the bird up for *Notornis*, and would appreciate any comment or anecdotes with regard to this rare straggler to our shores - a bird that, on its home turf, is known as the rainbird.

GERRY BRACKENBURY

Request for Norfolk Is. bird information

It is now over ten years since the data deposited with the South West Pacific Islands Records Scheme concerning Norfolk Island was last published (*Notornis* 32, pp.311-318). A number of interesting observations have been received since then, and I am currently working on those data with a view to further publication.

If other members have unpublished notes of birds seen during visits to Norfolk Island which they are willing to make available, I would be very pleased to hear from them - preferably by the end of May at the latest.

May I take this opportunity to remind members who have visited other parts of the South West Pacific that notes from any other islands can also be deposited with the scheme.

JIM MOORE

Convenor

32 Brook Street

Lower Hutt

Fax: (04) 569 6692

Email: mmmooore@xtra.co.nz

Mystery Bird #26

Yet again (is there a pattern here...?) our mystery bird is a wader, with the stout bill



indicating it is a plover. While several genera of plovers occur in New Zealand, the speckled back of the bird is a feature of *Pluvialis* plovers, the golden plovers and Grey Plover. Three of the four species in the genus have been recorded in New Zealand. The Pacific Golden Plover is a common summer migrant, the Grey Plover is recorded in small numbers each year, and the American Golden Plover has been recorded a very few times.

The mystery bird is a stocky one, big around the head and neck. The eye is large and dark, the bill deep and solid, the legs dark. Its main plumage features are a strongly speckled back, pale-notched tertials (the long protruding feathers by the wings), some medium-toned markings across the sides of the neck and breast, dark patches in front of and behind the eye, and a dark cap on the top of the head.

So what are the characteristics of the three contenders? Grey Plover has two clinchers - black axillaries (armpits) and a white rump. Of course neither of these are visible. The golden plovers are very similar, with no single easy feature. Pacific is the more golden species, with American being a much greyer bird. In black and white, this is of no use to us. One of the best distinctions between the two golden plovers is the length of the tertial feathers relative to the length of the primaries (the exposed wing-tip feathers). In Pacific the tertials are long and the wing-tips short, so there is only a small gap between the two. In American the tertials and the wing-tips are longer, so there is a larger gap. (The wing-tips in American also project further past the tail tip.) The tertials in the mystery bird appear far too long for American. Pacifics are slim, upright birds in appearance, and not the beefy bird in this picture.

Having eliminated the golden plovers, it is easy to see this bird is a Grey Plover, its bulkiness, big bill (more solid than the golden plovers) and large eye and head being characteristic. While only a few birds usually reach New Zealand each year, a group of twelve has been seen on Farewell Spit. While fairly drab in non-breeding plumage, in full summer dress Grey Plovers are striking birds, being black from the face down the underparts, and spangled black and white above (especially the males). A high-Arctic breeder, they nest on tundra headlands with good views. Males display in slow circling flights, with deep wingbeats, chest poking out, while uttering liquid, mournful whistles.

PHIL BATTLE

World Record Flight

Studies in bird habits increase our knowledge of the amazing flying feats of the globe-roaming migratory species. The Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) of the RAOU has captured a juvenile Common Tern that has flown 26,000 km from its nest in Finland to coastal Victoria.

The tern was caught on Friday 24 January on a beach near the RAOU's Rotomah Island Bird Observatory on the Gippsland Lakes, after what is believed to be the longest documented journey of any bird in the world. It was banded as a chick, in its nest on an island, in a lake in central Finland on 30 June 1996. It was banded with a second, Australian band and leg-flagged orange on both tibia before release.

The tern averaged an amazing 120 km per day for every day of its life. Given that it would not have flown until two weeks after banding, and it may have taken some time for the bird to grow strong enough to make the journey, and also as it cannot be assumed that the bird was caught the day it arrived, experts believe that its actual speed may have been closer to 200 km per day.

The *Guinness Book of Records* states that the longest bird journey was one made by an Arctic Tern, banded in Russia, on the White Sea in July 1955 and found in Fremantle, Western Australia, in May 1956. Assuming it also flew following a coastal route, that bird would have travelled approximately 22,500 km.

Assuming the bird followed the normal migratory route of Common Terns from Finland, it flew out into the Atlantic, down the coast of Africa, arriving at the normal wintering area at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. From there it was probably caught up in severe southern ocean gales, and so followed the route taken by two recently rescued sailors. Refuge was found on the Gippsland Lakes beach.

Around 500 Common Terns were banded and leg-flagged (single flags) at the same place and time. Clive Minton considers that the bird is too far out of its usual range to be likely to return to Western Europe, and is more likely to stay in the company of the local Common Terns and migrate with them to their breeding grounds in northern Asia. Recoveries of *Sterna* species moving between north-western Europe and Australasia point to probably frequent, if accidental, journeys that have been identified through long term banding programmes in these areas.

Common Terns are graceful seabirds which feed on small fish and weigh about 120 grams. It was in excellent condition and its weight was normal.

HUGO PHILLIPS

Banded Dotterels on Mt Tarawera

On Sunday 22 December 1996 I was on the top of Mt Tarawera and descending towards

the Black-backed Gull colony, which is on the upper slopes in typical grass and moss habitat.

Just below the summit I heard a call I was sure was the alarm call of a dotterel. I soon spotted a female Banded Dotterel and shortly after the male appeared. I cautiously crept a bit nearer, fairly certain that I wasn't disturbing them. I was hoping to see a nest but as I got nearer I noticed two tiny brown chicks being herded by the parents, moving among the rocks, feeding as they went.

I have previously seen Banded Dotterels near the summit of Mt Tarawera, but I was not aware of birds nesting. All references I have for Banded Dotterels suggest that nesting on exposed mountain tops in the North Island is unusual.

The Black-backed Gull colony has obviously been successful this year. I saw about 500 gulls with about 50 young in various stages of development. Only one nest had eggs in it, and the colony appeared to be in the late stages, with some birds having already left.

JOHN BRIERLEY

Clive Minton in NZ

Clive Minton, the world grand master of wader banding, was in New Zealand from 17-29 October at the invitation of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust. Whilst here, his enthusiasm and unflagging (pun intended) energy inspired many to get out and help on three banding days, with a record 32 participants on 28 October, when we were able to catch and band 64 Turnstones at a new site on the Manukau Harbour. Prior to this only 18 Turnstones had ever been banded in New Zealand, so the full biometric data gathered will be very valuable.

The three catches were at Miranda, Jordan's and Karaka. They yielded a total of 1,284 birds, including 875 Red Knots, 339 Bar-tailed Godwits, 64 Turnstones and 6 SIPOs. Most interesting were the knot retraps and controls. Six were from Australia, of which two from Victoria banded as first year birds in 1981 and 1983 (possibly now the oldest known Australasian knots), three from Queensland, including one banded just six weeks earlier near Brisbane. The last Australian was one of Clive Minton's (he gets everywhere) from a site near Darwin, Northern Territory, banded on 15 September 1995 on its southward migration.

The picture of the Australian birds is becoming clearer with more first year birds banded in Australia, before coming to New Zealand, as second year or older birds. They don't appear to return to Victoria once they have made it to New Zealand. We have caught 18 knots from Victoria, but they have caught none of our banded birds. Clive's visit also seemed to bring on a rash of colour flag sightings, with a yellow (N.W. Australia) Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot, green (Queensland) and white Turnstones

at Miranda as well as an orange (Victoria) Red Knot. All 64 Turnstones were fitted with white flags, so watch for them around New Zealand. In the twelve days Clive was in New Zealand he visited most wader harbours from Auckland to Parengarenga in the Far North. He was in raptures about them all.

ADRIAN RIEGEN

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Shining Cuckoo feeding

On the morning of 17 January 1997, I was drawn to investigate a persistent peeping call from the feijoa trees in our back yard. There, on a twig on the outside edge of the tree, sat a fully fledged Shining Cuckoo, anxiously watching the frantic searching of a pair of Grey Warblers as they gathered insects for the peeping bill that became a wide gape for the instant of food delivery.

Some of the food was gleaned directly from amongst the leaves, while some was caught on the wing. Green-winged leafhoppers and a small moth were the only prey I was able to identify, as most was delivered and devoured in great haste. The Grey Warblers never alighted in all the time I watched (about five minutes). As the food was being poked into the cuckoo's bill, the feathers of the Grey Warbler's tail fanned with an audible clicking sound as the bird did a quick about turn on the wing. The cuckoo moved about just inside or just on the outside edge of the trees, always keeping the warblers in its sight, and peeping incessantly.

BEV WOOLLEY

Hooked

While visiting the colony of Southern Black-backed Gulls on the Onoko Spit recently, we approached a bird which made as if to fly off. It made a few steps but couldn't fly. We caught the bird and found that it had a fish hook through its wing, with the line attached to the hook wound round and round like a clump of the weed yellow horned poppy. Fortunately we had pliers with us, so were able to free the bird which flew off without too much bother.

However tragedy was at the other end of the line, for there was a half grown chick with a hook from the same line stuck half way down its throat. Judging by its condition, the chick would have been dead in two or three days. A quick look round the colony didn't reveal any other birds entangled in the same way. We presume that the adult had found a line with a baited hook and brought it back for the chick, but how it managed to fly with two metres of line was a poser, and then for it to become entangled in another hook led to even more speculation.

COLIN SCADDEN & MATTHEW WONG

Another White Fantail

The September 1996 issue contained a note about a white Fantail which was seen in January 1996 about 10 kms from Taupo.

On 30 November 1996 Elizabeth Bruce from Matiere (north-west of Taumarunui) rang to say that she had just seen a white Fantail in her garden. It appeared to be all white except for a few darker bits in its tail. She had not seen or heard of such a thing before. I suggested she photograph it and keep me informed. When I checked a few weeks later I found that the bird had been seen on two successive days, and then not seen again. The hastily taken photos have unfortunately not added to the record, for, alas, there was no film in the camera.

HUGH CLIFFORD

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members in 1997.

New Zealand - Kirsten Jones, Brent Beaven, Fiona Baueroft, Ian Marshall, H. Greatex, Jenny Whyte, Robbie Holdaway, Joanne Sim, Robyn Skelton, Karrie Rose, Martin Abbott, Dr R.K. Dell, E. Munster, Ted Kitching, Troy Makan, Amelia Oppenheim, Steve McManus, Alec & Marion Milne, Ian Saville, R.M.E. Peach, B.E. Bishop, C.A.L. Smith, Wei-Hang Chua, Gavin & Rae McGregor, Cate Ryan, Jersen Luerling, Edith Shaw, Sara Treadgold. Overseas - L.H.G.. Cady (UK), Eddie Whalley (UK).

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary

Donations to the Society

Donations to the Society are hereby acknowledged and gratefully accepted.

Geoff & Jenny Doring, David Butler, Dr E.J. Kirk, Noelle Macdonald, G.L. Dow, Kathleen Todd, Scott Butcher, L.S. Rickard, R. & A.J. Schuckard, G.R. Brown, Peter Grant, Barry Friend, A.J. Beauchamp, Mary McEwen, Gerry Clark, W.A. Cook, Sue Cotton, Ian Southey, Barbara Walter, C.G. Hill, R. Ewen Fordyce, L.E. Kelynack, David Baker, B.M. Fitzgerald, John Davenport, Mr & Mrs D.M. Stracey, Kay Haslett, Mike & Sharon Graham, Keith McKenzie, M.J. Cridlington, C.J. Foreman, M.A. Waller, Janet Drake, Paul Cuming, Dr P.L. Munns, Mary Craven, J. Davidson, D.H. & E.L. Booth, A.R. Carey, N. McKercher & Janet Alexander, Peter Howden, G.W. de Lisle, Edith Shaw, Geoff Foreman, M.M. Simpson, G.W. Wells, Patrick Buxton, Margaret Bishop, G.I. Hunt, Barry Stevens, Kim Sterelney, Vicki Lowrie, Duncan Cunningham, Sharon Dell, W.A. Walters, David Wilson.

Overseas - Joanne Young (Australia), Nils Ake Anderson (Sweden), Neil Cheshire (Australia). All donations have gone to the specific fund requested.

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary

Publicity Opportunity for OSNZ

Waikato OSNZ was asked recently to participate in a Community Information Day at Raglan, the aim being to establish community-based environmental management of Whaingaroa, or Raglan Harbour.

A wide range of local government agencies, research and community-based organisations hosted displays showing aspects of the harbour's ecology. Aerial photographs, charts, maps and graphic displays illustrated the cumulative degrading effects that land use, over-fishing, increased population and pollution can have on a delicately balanced marine environment. Our OSNZ display concentrated on the birds that are likely to be seen on and around Raglan Harbour. Wader numbers for Raglan were compared with those for Aotea and Kawhia Harbours, using a series of graphs showing numbers for each of several species. Whaingaroa is about the same size as Aotea, but bird numbers for the most common wader species recorded over the past two years are noticeably lower on Whaingaroa. Diminishing numbers are also reported by elderly local residents.

A telescope was set up and focussed on a bird card at the end of the hall. Viewers, most of whom had never looked through a telescope, were amazed at the detail they were able to view through it. Bird slides could be seen on a viewer-operated projector with its own, built-in small screen. This provoked much discussion between visitors and stall-minders, many people recognising the birds they had seen (but could not identify) on the harbour or its margins. Several useful sightings were added to our records.

OSNZ membership brochures were offered and bird cards and posters sold. Several people who expressed a desire to form a bird watching group in the Raglan area have subsequently been contacted by letter, seeking their particular interest, offering our support for a group and suggestions for its activities. We will also try to involve these people in our Raglan Harbour census later in the year.

Another publicity opportunity arose when the RR was asked to provide an article about OSNZ activities for *Envirocare*, a small quarterly publication put out by Environment Waikato, which is delivered free to every Waikato household. A coloured "ornithology in action" photo, accompanied by a brief account of what we do as a group, has drawn over a dozen enquiries.

BEV WOOLLEY

Wader Publications

Two wader bibliographies are available from Ottenby Bird Observatory in Sweden. Volume 3 of the Special Report series contains 1,364 listed references to the genera *Calidris* and *Limicola* (price US\$7.00). Volume 4 contains 394 listed references to the genus *Pbalaropus* (Price US\$4.00). Both prices include surface mail postage. For air mail, add US\$1.00. Please make your specified order payable by international bank cheque or money order to:

Ottenby Bird Observatory

Pl. 1500

S-380 65 Degerhamn

Sweden

Members' attention is also drawn to the excellent *North Atlantic Shorebirds*, by Richard Chandler (published in 1989, Facts on File Inc., New York, 208 pp., ISBN 0 333 45880 X. US\$19.95). While this book has been available for some years and is compact, it deals with most of our northern hemisphere wader visitors and manages to cover comprehensively identification, plumages as applicable, races and references. Excellent photographs, plus tables detailing differences between the golden plovers and the difficult, small *Calidris* species add to what is a tremendous asset to any serious student of waders.

Also received recently, *The Birds of Togo*, BOU Checklist No. 14 by Robert A. Cheke and J. Frank Walsh, ISBN 0 907446 18 3.

New in OSNZ Library

While the Russian Arctic is home to millions of the world's migrant birds, there has been only limited interchange of knowledge between western biologists and those from the former Soviet Union, largely because of language difficulties. During a recent visit to New Zealand, Eugeny Syroechkovski Jr of the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences, generously presented the OSNZ library with several important volumes of Russian literature. These are available for members to borrow.

The Birds of Central Siberia, by Prof. Helena Rogacheva, 1992. In English, this summarises all the Russian literature on all species recorded from this region, which reaches from the high Arctic to the southern steppes (2.4 million sq. kms). Around 380 species are detailed, making this book one of the most valuable ornithological resources to come from Russia in recent years. While this book had only a limited run and is out of print, some copies are still available for purchase from Eugeny E. Syroechkovski Jr, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Science, Leninski Prospect 33, 117071 Moscow, Russia).

Swedish-Russia Tundra Ecology Expedition 94 - A Cruise Report by E.

Grnlund & O. Melander (eds.) 1995. This fascinating volume gives brief summaries of the research conducted during a joint Swedish-Russian expedition in 1994, which took a research vessel along nearly the entire north coast of Russia and Siberia. With 70 scientists participating (about half being ornithologists), even this summary volume runs to 462 pages! The scientific reports are organised into seven sections: I Spatial patterns in population ecology of plants. II Spatial patterns in population ecology of mammals and birds. III. Biodiversity and ecological variation in invertebrates and microorganisms. IV. Spatial patterns in genetical variation. V. Spatial patterns in migration and behavioural ecology of birds. VI. Tundra ecosystems and environmental change. VII. Marine sciences.

The following are smaller volumes written in Russian, with short English summaries:

Arctic Tundras of Taimyr and Kara Sea Islands: nature, fauna and conservation problems. Prof. E.V. Rogacheva (ed.). 1994. Two volumes.

Biological Resources and Biocenoses of Yenisey Taiga. E.V. Rogacheva (ed.) 1991.

Protection and rational use of the fauna and ecosystems of the Yenisey North. 1988.

Materials on the fauna of Central Siberia and adjacent regions of Mongolia. 1988.

Protection of the fauna of the extreme north and its rational use. 1978.

PHIL BATTLETT

Oceania Bird recordings

Members may be aware that I have been tape recording New Zealand bird song for almost thirty years and have been archiving the resulting tapes, both my own and those kindly donated by various members and other interested individuals. In more recent times material from Polynesia has come to hand and has been archived in the same way.

Late last year the decision was taken to expand the scope and coverage of the collection to cover Oceania, mainly because of the many species found on islands that are endangered due to degradation of forest cover and possibly rising water levels. One fact became apparent very quickly - a good number of recordings exist, but they are spread very widely around the world. This is an attempt to try to bring together as many as possible into one central collection, which would be of considerable assistance to the scientific community and radio and television production houses. Anyone who may be able to assist is asked to contact me.

LES MCPHERSON
P.O. Box 21083
Edgware, Christchurch

Magpie Predation

I am a 6th form student and doing a study into the effects of Australasian Magpie predation on native and exotic birdlife. As part of the study I am dissecting magpies to examine the contents of the digestive tract for any signs of the mortal remains of native birds. Currently I'm using the following method: 1. remove the entire digestive tract for a week or so, then dried out and examined. Anything south of the gizzard has nothing in it that I can recognise. I am having trouble recognising much north of the gizzard also. Can anyone make any suggestions?

JEREMY McEWAN

Blondell Road
11 R.D. Waimatua
Invercargill

Old Book Offer

Interested in collecting old books on ornithology? Offers wanted for a complete set (five volumes) of *The Handbook of British Birds* by Witherby *et al*, Third impression, belonging to a friend. Minus dust covers but otherwise in good order. Latest British catalogue value is approximately \$200.00. Best offer above this figure is acceptable. Contact:

KATHLEEN HARRISON

1 Addison Place
Halswell
Christchurch 3

Accommodation Available

We have some very good accommodation available for members and friends on our farm. Although we are hoping to make a little money out of it, we have another reason for attracting ornithologists and other bird-minded people - our twelve year old daughter, Marcia, who lives, thinks and dreams of birds. We appreciate and enjoy birdlife but do not have her sheer enthusiasm.

We have lots of New Zealand Pigeons, Tui, Bellbirds, New Zealand Robins and a bird which we cannot at present identify. In November nesting falcons make mustering a risky and frightening undertaking on parts of the property. They have cleaned up our bantam population!

The accommodation is a new, two bedroom bunkhouse, which can take up to eight, with facilities, a quite large kitchen/living area and a long veranda, fully self-contained, freshly painted and clean. We charge \$12.00 per person per night, with a minimum of \$30.00.

We would like to think that this sort of exposure for our daughter may help her with her interest and perhaps a future career.

AINSLIE GREEN

Remuera Station
P.O. Box 1
Kekerengu
Marlborough
Ph. (03) 575 8678

Kotuku in Town

The following is a selection of responses to an email request from Dean Nelson, DoC Dunedin, for assistance.

"I hope someone can help me with a small problem. White Herons are regularly seen around Dunedin estuaries and also near a small stream in the Northeast Valley. However recently one has taken to roosting during the day (and possibly the night) on a couple of houses. That would probably be fine, except that one house is a split level arrangement and the bird has access to some windows which it persists in tapping on quite loudly. It has also walked up to the door on the other house and pecked at the glass door.

"That was all very nice for a start but the people have started to get a bit sick of the constant tapping. One guy has put supermarket bags up on his roof to blow in the wind but that does not seem to have worried it. The bird seems quite tame and can be approached quite closely. When not tormenting the home owner, it sits and preens quite happily..." (Dean Nelson)

"Hi Dean, I wonder if it is Keri Hulme's "pet" heron who has been visiting her garden for years and years. The one she has observed spearing silvereyes for food. Anyhow I wonder if the house owners have tried pulling their curtains - which would reduce reflectivity and perhaps the bird's interest?" (Karen Baird)

"Similar problems with friends in Motueka. At first glad to see one around, then began fishing in the goldfish pond. Cleaned it out. But that wasn't the worst for them. It took to perching on the house and modifying the paint work. Finally chased away to shift to a neighbour with a similar experience. Perhaps it's now reached Dunedin?" (Graeme Jane)

"I don't know of any hand-reared Kotuku, but some farmers at Whataroa, near the Waitangimoana breeding ground, put food out for them, and they are regularly seen around the houses there. One family thought they were an asset until they realised all their goldfish in the outdoor pond had been cleaned up by a regular visitor. Such incidences could well explain the bird's tameness. I see no harm in forced repatriation" (Dave Eastwood)

"After reading your note I think you may have encountered a bird that Gary Aburn feeds at the heron colony. The tapping and

landing on roofs is usually when it demands food. Hopefully the people involved haven't fed it and it may go away. Apart from not feeding it I haven't any other solutions. If you do decide to relocate it can you band it - this will confirm if it is the same bird that gets fed at the colony. One thing that will happen for sure is that it will return to Waitangirotu in the spring" (John Reid)

"I knew of one bird, I think in the early 80s, which was regularly seen outside a fish shop in Hokitika. I believe that the owner used to give this White Heron an odd fish or two. Possibly a garden hose to squirt the bird with water? The bird is probably tapping because it can see its own reflection, or it may be catching insects that are up against the window, especially moths at night. This is an ideal opportunity to get some photos, Dean" (S.P. Elkington)

"What a delight to have a Kotuku on the doorstep. Far better than the sounds of the radio/TV and passing cars." (Dick Veitch)

"There are no White Herons on my house in Brooklyn (at least, not that I saw last night when I was up there feeding the turkeys)." (Neal Gordon)

"What you have sounds like a bird a little in love with its own reflection. At the moment many bird species are going through what is known as a false spring and are exhibiting breeding behaviour. It's all triggered by daylight hours and as you will know we currently have the same daylight hours as spring. Knowing Dunedin weather, it will pretty soon get discouraged, as sitting on top of a house in an Otago southerly would suppress even the most ardent." (Ian Hogarth)

"Try the literature on storks in Europe. They frequently nest on chimneys and one of the ways of reducing the problem is to build false chimneys. It is also an honour, as it were, to have such a bird on your roof. Try the university and email the ICPB" (Dave Hunt)

"Get the owners to spray paint their windows with frosting so that the bird can't see its own reflection" (Dave, Oamaru) "What about horizontal wires/strings 12 inches above the roof for a metre or so in front of the window. A similar technique is used to keep herons away from commercial fish ponds" (Laurence Barea)

"In every adversity is the seat of an opportunity - to quote somebody or other. It seems to me that you have the opportunity to delve into some interesting behavioural stuff. Perhaps the poor chap thinks that it's water - the fact that it is vertical is clearly irrelevant to a bird of very small brain (with apologies to A.A. Milne). Perhaps it has learned that if you tap on the hard, vertical water on those big boxes that humans live in, one of them will come out and give you something to eat." (Duncan Cunningham)

"Hawk or, much better, NZ Eagle shaped kite, or eagle image etched onto the glass, 3-D hologram of eagle inside the house - hoping the genes still remember the bird. Do they have a danger/alarm call that could be taped and played back?" (Peter Kerse)

"We have an American mag in the library called *Wildlife Rehabilitation Today* which had a brief article on discouraging woodpeckers from drumming on your house. Suggestions to scare them off were - balloons, child's pinwheel, flash tape, and strings of shiny, noisy tin can lids, wind chimes and/or pulsating water sprinklers. Another article suggested animal silhouettes (perhaps a cardboard cat - I've seen them in gift shops here - or one of those cat faced bird scarers with the reflective eyes might work), blinking lights, hanging plants, white drapes and various horizontal and vertical blind-like arrangements of cloth strips. The author found that a pattern of vertical and horizontal stripes was effective in preventing bird strikes." (Shona Mackay)

"Let's face it - White herons are only Aussie immigrants, so if you get the homeowners to sing *Waltzing Matilda* the offending Kotuku will pine for the billabongs and fly back to his or her ancestral home. Failing that, the only other solutions I can think of are contrary to certain provisions of the Wildlife Act. However I can send you the recipe for Kotuku pie if you do finally need it." (Tony Robinson)

Regional Roundup

Northland

During November the New Zealand Dotted count in the Cape Reinga/North Cape area was completed, as were the White-fronted Tern survey, and the November wader survey of the Kaipara, Whangarei and Far North harbours - a busy month. Our November meeting was spent planning our programme for 1997, followed by a fascinating video about the Antipodes Islands entitled "The Island of Strange Noises".

In December we gathered at Jean Hawken's home for our annual barbecue and stroll around her avocado orchard.

Mid-December a predator was taking eggs from nests on Waipu Spit near the precious Fairy Tern nest, avoiding all the carefully set traps, so eight members spent some time on five nights to try and identify the culprit. It appeared to be a large mustelid from the fleeting glimpse two people caught of it, and from chewed marks on a bait. At that point Cyclone Fergus swept the area clean, including the Fairy Tern nest. Fortunately one egg (of two) had been removed and was hatched at the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre, and placed as soon as possible in a nest at Mangawhai which had survived the storm but had an infertile egg. The parent appeared to accept the chick but it disappeared during Cyclone Drena about 48 hours later.

Members were also able to relieve Andrea Booth at Ruakaka/Waipu and Leigh Honnor at Mangawhai for three days each on shorebird protection work. It was a hot but satisfying job, untangling and replacing

the fences around the nesting areas after the storms had damaged them.

Early in January we banded 44 Black-backed Gull chicks at Kauri Mountain Beach and a hundred at the Waipu oxidation ponds. The chicks were very healthy and lively, so food supplies are good. Four adult birds had flown into a transformer and had been electrocuted - luckily none had bands, as it would have been a bit tricky to read them! The two eggs in a Variable Oystercatcher's nest hatched during the day as we banded.

The last weekend in January we completed a survey of the Far North lakes, well organised by Janet Snell, for the second year in succession after a ten year gap. The results are still being analysed, but Te Werahi Lagoon showed an increase in numbers since last year, and a pair of Australian Coots were of interest, as they are uncommon in the North.

A Spotless Crake responded to taped calls at Sweetwater and another was seen at Shenstone. Jones Lake at Waiharahara had nineteen different species, including an Australian Little Grebe, quite a surprising result for a relatively small lake. A pair of Australian Little Grebes and a sandpiper were also seen at the Sweetwater Lakes. It was also fascinating to see a young NZ Dabchick, tucked under the feathers on the parent's back, being taken on dives with the parent at Kimberley Lake.

Preparations for the AGM and conference are well underway, and we have ordered good weather. I think we can guarantee an earthquake-free conference!

(Lorna Simpkin)

South Auckland

As the year drew to a close many South Auckland members found themselves at our annual end-of-year barbecue, this time at the home of Bill Ormond who lives in rural Pukekohe. We would like to extend our thanks to Bill for his hospitality on the night.

An early Christmas present for some came in the form of a rare wader on the Stilt Ponds at Miranda. Keith Woodley spotted an unusual bird early on the morning of 23 December, which he quickly identified as a non-breeding plumaged Red-necked Phalarope. By early evening a small assemblage of admirers watched the bird daintily picking insects off the surface of the water at the ponds. Tame and approachable, excellent views were had in what can only be described as perfect light and weather conditions. Unfortunately the bird chose not to stay long and was last seen a few days later.

While on the subject of unusual waders, a possible dowitcher of indeterminate species was reported from the same location on the last day of the year. Despite searches on 1 January, the bird in question could not be relocated.

The two cyclones which plagued Auckland over the festive season caused much damage at many of our best sites. The

Black-billed Gull colony at Miranda was washed over. Fortunately, however, many young creched together and survived the worst of the storm. 116 individuals were colour banded the following day and now sport a green band over a metal one. Just three days later an adult, banded on the same day, was seen by Elaine Ward at Conifer Grove (where she also spotted a Marsh Sandpiper recently) - a nice quick result.

One colony which didn't fare so well was the White-fronted Tern site at the mouth of the Waikato River, which was totally destroyed as a result of the appalling weather.

Finally, the most recent report of interest from our region relates to fifteen Little Terns at Kidds, Karaka, on 9 February. Many were assuming breeding plumage.

With another year of birding activities ahead of us, and many interesting and varied meetings planned, we all hope 1997 will be as interesting as last year was.

(Paul Harrison)

Waikato

Strong winds over the summer have brought several unusual species to the Waikato and have encouraged beach patrollers to get out much more frequently. Found dead as wrecks were a Spine-tailed Swift at Taharoa (22 November), a Long-tailed Skua at Raglan on Christmas Day and a White-capped Noddy at Ruapuke (21 January). A live Sooty Tern, picked up by a Te Pahu farmer on 13 January, died the next day. The rough weather also took a toll of small petrels, with diving petrels and storm petrels being found in higher numbers than usual on our beaches.

Nick and Ingrid Dunckley reported hearing a Kokako at the end of Grays Road on Pirongia on 16 November.

Five Pukeko were seen at Gordonton by Gail Riddell trying unsuccessfully to catch a young rabbit on 16 January.

The New Zealand Dotterel census in late October turned up seventeen birds, with one or two birds present on most sandy beaches between the Hurawai Stream in the north and Taharoa in the south. Only two nests were found. The November harbours census found three chicks and two nests within Kawhia Harbour and one nest on an Aotea shellbank. As access to most areas is difficult, fledging success has not been followed up.

New Zealand Dotterels were the topic of our November meeting, when Bev Woolley spoke about the dispersal of juveniles from Opoutere, and Andrea Lord discussed the responses of New Zealand Dotterels to human disturbance. Our Christmas pot luck dinner was again a popular event, with Frank Bailey's bird quiz and Paul Cumings's mystery bird photos providing after dinner entertainment.

(Bev Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

Some members were part of the large group which enjoyed the weekend with Dr Clive Minton at Miranda. The trip to look for Blue Ducks in December was rescheduled for a later date, and the group decided to visit the large White-fronted Tern colony at the Waiaua River mouth. We were rewarded with a marvellous spectacle of over 600 adult birds and 150 chicks in various stages of development.

Some members assisted with the DoC census of New Zealand Dotterels. Assistance was also provided for Hugh Clifford with the banding of Grey-faced Petrel chicks on Mt Maunganui.

A number of gull and tern colonies have been located, including the Waiaua River mouth, Tern Island in Ohiwa Harbour, Sulphur Point, Tauranga Harbour, Maketu Spit, Whale Island and White Island. Black-billed Gulls were at Sulphur Point, Lake Rotorua, Tern Island and Tauranga Harbour.

Other interesting sightings include a Greater Frigatebird, seen initially by Lawrence Barea and later by John and Margaret Brierley. The bird was cruising round feeding at the Rangataiki River mouth. There have been only twelve other New Zealand records since 1861.

Three White-winged Black Terns were seen by Malcolm Hutton on Tern Island amongst the White-fronted Tern breeding colony. A pair of Banded Dotterels with two chicks were on the top of Mt Tarawera.

(John Brierley)

In contrast to last year, when no young New Zealand Dotterels were known to have fledged, the situation has been considerably better. DoC has monitored the nesting sites at the estuaries of three local rivers, and six birds are known to have fledged at Waiaua, five at the Waioeka, but unfortunately none at the Waiohiki, where two nests were lost to high tides in a very restricted area and there was dog disturbance at a third nest.

Varying numbers of Weka and New Zealand Pipits are to be seen on most visits to the Toatoa area, when the primary reason for the trip is usually to observe Blue Ducks. DoC has started a six year observation of Weka in this area, with a person resident in the area for the purpose. It would appear that the Toatoa population is the only significant one left in the North Island.

(Bill Sloan)

Hawkes Bay



Greater Frigatebird, Rangataiki River.

Photo: John Brierley

The December meeting was held at Jim and Christine's place, followed by a barbecue. Current issues and sightings were discussed.

The gull and tern nesting this year appears to have been a repeat of last year's - that is, unsuccessful. The 600 White-fronted Terns that began nesting at Waitangi deserted and left eggs. We are not sure what the cause was. Porangahau was checked twice in November/December but no evidence of a nesting colony was found. A few birds, around half a dozen, nested on a disused wharf at the port.

Six White-winged Black Terns have been present at the Westshore Lagoon and North Pond. One is in full breeding plumage and we assume that it is the bird that has been present for the past two years. A Little Egret has been seen at East Clive and one was seen under the Waiohiki Bridge on the Tutaekuri River. Two Eastern Rosellas were seen flying over the Hastings Golf Course in early December.

On a visit to Porangahau to check for nesting gulls and terns, we saw a curlew, a New Zealand Dotterel, a turnstone, six Royal Spoonbills and a Caspian Tern nesting colony with 70 birds and about 135 nests with 1-3 eggs. Nine Spotted Shags were on the sewer outfall at East Clive in mid January.

(Christine McRae)

Taranaki

At the November meeting, members enjoyed looking at slides while listening to Barry Hartley give a talk on the Solomon Islands. We were pleased to hear from Audrey Eagle, a valued past member, now living in Dunedin.

Up to twelve NZ Scaup were seen on the Waiwakaiho Pump pond, on the edge of an industrial area, and 35 were on Lake Ratapiko, in the Inglewood area. A farmer's wife reported nine Eastern Rosellas on the Waitaanga South Road, and there have been numerous reports from Oakura township, where some people regard the birds as pests. On an abandoned Petrocorp well site at Kaimiro a flock of 50+ Redpolls was seen feeding on seeds from small plants in the gravel. A pair of NZ Falcons was flying over the New Plymouth city area - an unusual sight.

Near Cape Egmont, at the mouth of the Pungaereere Stream, a pair of NZ Dotterels was seen, and one lone bird was reported at the Tangaporutu River Estuary. Over the last two months there were regular sightings of several Royal Spoonbills and Reef Herons, including five spoonbills on Motu-o-Tamatea Island.

A young kiwi, which had lost a leg in a gin trap at Lucy's Gully, was treated by a local vet, but the bird may not survive. In an area around the Patea River mouth many White-fronted Terns (130) were recorded. As some were in breeding plumage it is thought that there may be a nesting colony nearby.

David Medway spoke at the December meeting on the naming of the Pied Tit. This reporter may keep to the common name!

Long-tailed Cuckoos have been heard calling inland and one bird was found dead after hitting a window at the coastal Methanex plant. In late January a Kaka was observed in the Stoney River area of Egmont National Park. In December 73 White-fronted Terns nested on an island in the marine park and fledglings were also noted. On stacks off the Tongaporutu River mouth White-fronted Terns were seen, also obviously nesting, in January. Other birds in the marine park were up to a hundred Buller's Shearwaters, plus a raft of 78+ Flesh-footed Shearwaters, just off Motumahanga Island, where they are nesting at this time of year.

A beach patrol in the Cape Egmont area produced forty wrecks. Many members of the public have been reporting the presence of Rooks in the city. All our members, with one exception, have been aware of frequent sightings. Fernbirds have been seen and heard in good numbers at Lake Rotokare, inland from Eltham, plus Spotless Crakes heard there.

Two summer field trips to the Waitaanga State Forest, off SH40, have been held. Bird numbers of both trips were quite exceptional. Highlights were Bellbirds feeding on red mistletoe (*Peraxilla colensoi*) flowers, dozens of Tui which had left the forest to feed on wineberry on a cleared hillside, alongside NZ Pigeons, two NZ Robin fledglings being fed by adults, and a Silveryeye sitting on a nest. The calling of Whiteheads was continuous and many were seen, as were Grey Warblers and Pied Tits. These high bird numbers are very pleasing, as it is about three months since the 1080 drop.

Some members assisted on three DoC summer programme trips, and one member spent a great deal of time trying to identify a mystery bird heard calling on a nearby property. We know he will never forget the croak of the elusive whistling frog! Our youngest member is off to university, and we wish Cameron all the best with his studies.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Manawatu

Everyone must be thinking the Manawatu has disappeared off the map of New Zealand since the AGM, but here we are still alive and full of enthusiasm. The AGM certainly took its toll of people's energies, and numerous people took off on overseas trips in the second half of 1996. Despite all these excuses, active members are still pursuing their pet projects.

David and Karen Howell visit Pukepuke Lagoon on a regular basis, and are gathering information on crakes and Fernbirds in particular.

Jennifer and Roger Wasley went to the Chatham Islands in October to assist with the Taiko programme. Unfortunately this work was abandoned for 1996 after the tragic death of Raewyn and Gavin. Roger also went up to Mokoia Island to help Brent Stephenson with his Morepork project. As Roger went onto the island, Gabor Lovei came off, having spent the weekend mist-netting Stitchbirds in order to collect blood samples for Isabel Castro's research project.

Arctic waders seem to be present in similar numbers to 1996 at Foxton Estuary. Besides the Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots, there have been Turnstones, Sharp-tailed, Curlew and Pectoral Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattler, Pacific Golden Plovers and a Mongolian Dotterel in January.

Besides Jim and Maureen Moore, who have a bach at Foxton Beach, and Walter and Olive Chelley who reside there permanently, Ian Saville has returned to a job at Ohakea, and is living in Feilding. We certainly welcome Ian's very sharp eyes back to the Manawatu. On 4 January he saw five different species of tern at Foxton - White-fronted, Black-fronted, Caspian, Little and White-winged Black. Jim Moore, on one of his visits to the dune lakes, north of Foxton Beach, came across five Pectoral Sandpipers in a nice wetland area beside the lake, and the local farmer told him he had seen Glossy Ibises there. Jim had seen four Glossy Ibises flying over Foxton previously, so this is obviously their feeding area.

We always keep a look-out for banded birds, but we have had no luck so far with the gulls or oystercatchers. Jim Moore spotted a white flagged godwit and Roger Slack a Lesser Knot recently. Wrybills are now back from their breeding grounds and the bird banded by DoC as a chick on the Ohau in 1993 has returned, which is pleasing to see.

Another of Ian's snippets - he saw two Eastern Rosellas at Pureora on 25 January and is unsure if this is in their normal range. He also came across quite a congregation of Long-tailed Cuckoos on Bismark Road (Pureora). He could see five birds and hear another five simultaneously. Must have been very noisy! As this goes to press he has also seen a Great Knot at the Foxton Estuary.

Finally we would like to congratulate Phil Battley for gaining a scholarship to do a PhD in Brisbane.

Hope to see many of you in Whangarei.

(Pam Slack)

Wairarapa

Spring floods upset our searching for Black-fronted Dotterel nests on both Awhea and Ruamahanga Rivers. This was to have been a follow-up to the census work done in March. While on the Awhea we were able to get good, close-up views of Shining Cuckoos which seemed to be about in good numbers.

Although bad weather upset some other field trips, members were active at other times. A visit to the outer Marlborough

Sounds with Wellington members brought good views of Fluttering Shearwaters, Grey-faced Petrels and Common Diving Petrels, as well as King Shags. Much of our evening activity has been of a self help educational type, with members presenting sessions about nests and breeding, plumage and sexual dimorphism, bush birds and waders. These evening have been a great success, providing information and stimulating much discussion.

A visit to the natural history section of the National Museum enabled us to study many species closely. Waders were the main interest, but other species were also studied. While everyone was able to study size differences and the like with specimens in hand, it highlighted the care needed in field identification.

Birds reported over recent months have been NZ Falcons (several sightings), and Cattle Egrets, which were in the Te Ore Ore area for over three months. Royal Spoonbills have often been seen at Lake Wairarapa, 32 being the highest number. Lake Wairarapa has also produced sightings of Turnstones, Bar-tailed Godwits, Black-fronted Terns, White Heron and Reef Heron. Earlier in the year a starved Australasian Bittern was rescued from the roadside east of Masterton - this was the first seen for many years. Unfortunately it died a couple of days later.

The Castlepoint Reef proved to be a good site for White-fronted Terns with over 200 nests. Another small group of these terns was seen on rocks near Te Awaiti further south. Ten nests were also found on Onoke Spit on 7 December, and by the 24th this number had risen to 177, and 237 by 12 January. 13 had two eggs, the rest with single eggs.

Caspian Terns on the spit renested after the colony had been vandalised on 28 October, only to abandon that site in favour of the original, where there were 28 nests on 24 December. A sudden weather change a week after hatching appears to have been responsible for the death of six chicks.

On excursions to Napier and Foxton Estuary members have been able to see Little Terns, White-winged Black Terns and a tattler which are not often seen in our region. The Banded Rail at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust was a highlight of a visit there. Others included Wrybills and stints, along with New Zealand Dotterels and other waders.

(Colin Scadden)

Wellington

For those of us who went to the Kaipara, 1997 started on a really high note. It was an exciting week with lots of activities in a new area. We saw a lot of the Kaipara but not all by any means - it's a huge area! Highlights for me included seeing New Zealand Dotterel chicks in the hand, beach patrolling along Muriwai Beach, the harbour survey from a boat and visiting remote areas around Pouto. Evenings were busy with talks and slides, after we had enjoyed happy hour and excellent dinners from the cheerful chefs.

All in all a highly successful week. Many thanks and congratulations to Gwenda and her team.

So far this year in Wellington we have done a weekend of counts at Karori Reservoir, and one of the kiwi counts on Kapiti. There are two more Kapiti counts coming up in February and March. In April we start a re-run of the harbour survey last done several years ago. It will be interesting to see what changes have occurred.

At the February meeting Enfy's Graham offered her services as RR. We are grateful to Enfy's for this and I am sure that she will do an excellent job. Our thanks to Allan Munro who has been standing in.

We had two talks at this meeting. Peter Reese showed some slides from his trip to the Snares in search of transmitters on elusive Buller's Mollymawks. I talked about my wonderful trip to Campbell Island as a helper for Sue Waugh with her research on Black-browed and Grey-headed Mollymawks. An experience of a lifetime for me, especially being so closely involved with such beautiful birds.

(Ros Batcheler)

Nelson

The December meeting included an illustrated talk by Rob Schuckard on his recent visit to the Pribilof Islands near the Aleutian Chain - a fascinating account from this remote corner of the Pacific, where the birdlife and the culture exhibit the influence of their oceanic, Asian and American origins.

The gannet team, led by the three stalwarts Henk Heinekamp, Willie Cook and Rob Schuckard, has continued its work on Farewell Spit. It seems that the detailed research they were doing on site fidelity within this colony will now concentrate on whether birds even bother to stay at the Spit. The high tides associated with Cyclone Drena were seen to wash this colony of some 1,000 nests into oblivion. A short note is in prep.

Documenting the White-fronted Tern colonies and comparison with last year has proved interesting. A survey of the outer Sounds colonies was done in conjunction with Rob's census of King Shags and involved a full day on the water. Other trips were less ambitious, but tested our skills in sea kayaks on one occasion. While the small colonies of the Sounds remained similar to last year and Golden Bay continued to have virtually no breeding, substantial colonies developed in Nelson Haven and Tasman Bay. I would certainly like to see some of these colonies studied over a longer term to better understand these variations.

Members and public continue to ask questions about the apparent increased influx of Spotted Shags each winter. I hope that we can establish a way of monitoring this phenomenon in future.

A few members visited the Mohua site on Mt Stokes during January. Perhaps we will be able to focus more on forest species during this year. There may be opportunities for us to get involved in monitoring the

changes to birdlife in Nelson Lakes National Park after the intensive predator control planned for the near future.

The region has several new members this year who may well stimulate us in new areas of ornithology.

(Peter Gaze)

Canterbury

At our last meeting for 1996, Andrew Grant gave an enthralling account of the trials and tribulations of an expedition to the Antipodes Islands. Along with other DoC colleagues, the primary objective of the trip was to search for a new nesting area for the Chatham Island Taiko. This species is an enigma as many of the adult birds banded on the main Chatham Island have not been recaptured, and winds from the south-east, which do bring birds ashore on the Chathams, suggest that adult birds may be flying in from subantarctic waters. No new colonies were discovered on the Antipodes, but amongst the 1400 skulls examined from dead *Pterodroma* petrels, two were of the size that fitted the Taiko range or were one of those other mysteries of the "hybrid" petrel world. Other work carried out on the expedition were surveys of Rockhopper and Erect-crested Penguin colonies, banding of Wandering Albatross chicks, and perhaps the highlight was the discovery that Antipodes Island Parakeets were preying on nesting adult Grey-backed Storm Petrels.

Summer arrived and departed very quickly along the eastern side of the South Island. Some birds were affected by some rather late breeding, eg. NZ Scaup, Yellowheads and Orange-fronted Parakeets. Others, such as riverbed species - Wrybills, Banded Dotterels, Black-fronted Terns, Black-billed Gulls and Black Stilts had a better than average breeding season; in the MacKenzie Basin for example.

The search for evidence of South Island Kokako continued during late spring and early summer by a number of members. Several trips to the Lake Monowai area by Ron Nilsson were thwarted by bad weather. However Andrew Grant and John Kearvell did find fresh "grubbing" sign in the Lake Sumner area.

After a severe north-west gale on 13 January, an unconfirmed report was received of two female Satin Flycatchers observed along the western edge of Akaroa Harbour. Apparently a Mr Ted Nicholls observed the birds through a telescope as they rested in a garden in the tiny settlement of Wainui.

Lake Ellesmere has produced several interesting sightings over the past two months. The first was a Curlew Sandpiper in full breeding plumage, and the second an orange flagged Red-necked Stint. The latter bird has been observed for the past five years at Lake Ellesmere during summer months but was caught and flagged as an adult bird in New South Wales during an earlier migration. In early February Kathleen Harrison and Sheila Petch recorded 68 Cattle Egrets on paddocks adjacent to the lake. This represents the entire Canterbury influx of egrets for the season. About 70% of the birds were in varying stages of breeding plumage,

but most are now losing it. Instead of the normal departure for Australia, this year the entire flock appears to be overwintering.

In a year when riverbed birds found it difficult to achieve breeding success in some areas, Sheila Petch recorded 97 Black-billed Gull nests in late December on a newly constructed man-made shingle pit at Peacock Springs on the outskirts of Christchurch. Black-fronted Terns had also recently fledged juveniles. Plans are to keep the area in its present state.

The estuary of the Ashley River continues to reveal the importance of this habitat for wading birds. Tony Crocker observed 17 Lesser Knots - rare in Canterbury - and four Far-eastern Curlews, as well as a banded Black Stilt. The latter bird is a well-known male individual named "Ashley", as he often stops at the estuary on his annual migration to Kawhia Harbour, often with chicks. He nests in the MacKenzie Basin and is now close to the oldest known wild Black Stilt and was banded as an adult in 1986. It is estimated that "Ashley" has travelled more than 18,000 km in his lifetime.

(Ron Nilsson)

Southland

Members have been active over the summer banding spoonbills on Omaui Island and Caspian Terns in the Invercargill Estuary, following the progress of Black-billed Gulls, patrolling Oreti Beach and generally taking note of things ornithological.

Some snippets - a Chukor in snow at the very top of Coronet Peak, Kaka and Tui in large numbers at Halfmoon Bay and Ulva Island, four tattlers at Awarua Bay, large numbers of Long-tailed Cuckoos reported from beech forest on the Kepler and Milford Tracks, spoonbills increasing, a minor wreck of Blue Penguins in January and Little Owls nesting in a garage roller door.

(Lloyd Esler)

Chatham Islands

It has been a busy summer of birdwatching at the Chathams. On a still evening in December at Moreroa Swamp both Marsh and Spotless Crakes were heard in response to taped calls being played (unfortunately neither species was seen). Spotless Crakes were last recorded in the Chathams in 1949, and Marsh Crakes have not been recorded since late last century. The President of the Society saw an Australasian Gannet flying along the coast at Wharekauri in January; two Erect-crested Penguins were seen in February, one on the Forty Fours and a second at Taupeka. Both of these species are only infrequently recorded at the Chathams.

On Southeast Island a Chatham Island Oystercatcher, which was banded on Southeast in 1970 as an adult, was recorded breeding. This bird therefore has a minimum age of 28 years, getting close to the oystercatcher world record of 35 years old. On Mangere Island, breeding by White-faced Storm Petrels was confirmed when

two chicks were found in burrows. The western beaches are still casting up interesting finds, with a Little Shearwater and Salvin's Mollymawk found.

The project on banded terns has begun - see article this issue - in which all resident OSNZ members and two visiting members were involved. The Chathams region can therefore boast a 100% turnout to all OSNZ field trips so far!

(Mike Bell)

What's On



Northland/Far North

29-30 March - post-breeding NZ Dotterel and White-fronted Tern survey, east coast. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

31 March - as above, Pouto and lakes. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

10 April - evening meeting, Advisory Services, Alexander Street, Whangarei. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

30 May - 2 June - AGM and annual conference
21-22 June - Whangarei and Kaipara Harbours census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988, David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

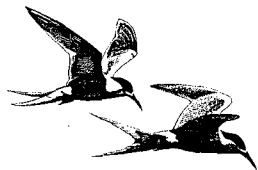
28-29 June - Far North harbours census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

10 April - evening meeting. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

11-13 July - Motukawanui Island. Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

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



South Auckland

8 April - evening meeting, Papakura Croquet clubrooms, Chapel Street, Papakura. Fairy Terns. Ph. David Lawrie, (09) 238 8407.

13 May - evening meeting, Photographic highlights from the South Island. Ph. David Lawrie, (09) 238 8407.

10 June - evening meeting, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. Ph. David Lawrie, (09) 238 8407.

21 June - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

29 June - Firth of Thames census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

Waikato

16 April - evening meeting, DoC conference room, London Street, Hamilton. - Gould's

Petrel on Cabbage Tree Island. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

2-4 May - weekend camp, Rangitoto Station and the Mangatutu. Ph. Ingrid Dunckley to book (07) 856 0944.

21 May - evening meeting, Birds of Africa. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

18 June - evening meeting, panel question and answer session. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

21 June - Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan Harbours census. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 896 9340.

Monthly beach patrols of west coast beaches. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891 Hamilton Lake counts - third Sunday of the month. Ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729 or Brian Challinor (07) 855 2561.

Bay of Plenty

13 April - Ducks Unlimited, Reporoa. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

May - Blue Ducks and Weka near Opotiki. Ph. Bill Sloan (07) 315 7489.

8 June - winter wader census, Tauranga Harbour. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406.

28 June - winter wader census, Kaituna cut area. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Taranaki

Manawatu

Wanganui

Hawkes Bay

6 April - Mohi Bush. Ph. Christine McRae. 4

May - 'Corrakane' Kereru Road. Ph. Christine McRae.

Wairarapa

9 April - evening meeting, Croquet clubrooms, Queen Elizabeth Park, Masterton. Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre update. Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

20 April - field trip to Kiriwhakapapa. Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

8 May - evening meeting, St Johns Hall, Greytown. Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

24 May - mist-netting and banding, Apple Source Orchard, Te Ore Ore. Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

Wellington

7 April - evening meeting, Conservation Sciences Centre, DoC, 58 Tory Street. Matthew Lark on birds.

13 April - Wellington Harbour survey. Ph. Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

5 May - evening meeting, Wellington region oil spill response.

11 May - Wellington Harbour survey. Ph. Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

3 June - evening meeting, Kiwi incubation.

8 June - Wellington Harbour survey. Ph. Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

7 July - evening meeting, NZ Robins in Pureora and Kapiti.

13 July - Wellington Harbour survey. Ph. Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Mapping scheme - Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

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

Nelson

Marlborough

Canterbury

7 April - evening meeting, Middleton Grange School, Riccarton. John Warham on early days in ornithology. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

12 April - Farewell to the waders. Ph. Kathleen Harrison (03) 322 9699.

Anzac Weekend - weekend on West Coast, combined with Nelson and Canterbury regions. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

11 May - looking for parakeets. Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 348 1889.

26 May - evening meeting, Laughing Owls. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

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

Evening meetings - 3rd Wednesday of even months, Otago Art Society building, 8 pm. Ph. Peter Schweigman (03) 455 2790.

15 June - winter wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

Southland

Evening meetings, Southland Museum, second Wednesday of even months. Ph. Lloyd Esler (03) 217 9060.

Beach patrols - most Friday evenings. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS 10 MAY