

No.84 September 1997

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

Edited by TONY CROCKER

118 Cones Road, Ashley RD2 Rangiora.

Phone: 03-313 4995, Fax: 03-364 2163

Email: t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz

for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this newsletter are subject to confirmation.

OSNZ News

Supplement to NOTORNIS • Vol. 44, Part 3
September 1997 • ISSN 0111-2686

AGM Field Trips

Pouto Experience

A busload of members left the Onerahi Hotel for Dargaville in threatening weather to meet up with Taylor Made Tours' "Bigfoot". We reached the wild west coast sandy beach through the spectacular Mahuta Gap Gorge. Travelling south, groups of South Island Pied and Variable Oystercatchers, and Pied Stilts were feeding on the beach exposed by the outgoing tide. From time to time groups of Pied Shags and White-fronted and Caspian Terns flopped lazily out of the track of our bus.

For morning tea we stopped at a small coastal lake near Round Hill. A brave group crossed the dunes in misty rain to observe Grey Ducks, Paradise Shelducks, Black Swans, Pied and Little Shags and a pair of NZ Dabchicks. The journey to Pouto along the open sandy beach in deteriorating weather saw godwits, NZ Dotterels and Banded Dotterels added to the species already observed.

As we reached the historic Marine Hall at Pouto, the showery rain became continuous and remained that way for the rest of the afternoon, developing into a cyclone the next day. In the shelter of the hall a hearty meal was provided by the local community from a mobile kitchen. This break saw much chatter, questions and sharing of ornithological experiences. Because of the recently ploughed fields, access to Lake Humuhumu was impossible and our visit was abandoned. "Big Foot" and a four-wheel van headed instead back along the beach towards North Head, in an attempt to visit Stick Lake. Strong winds and torrential rain saw our band beat a retreat to Pouto and the awaiting bus. However we were able to view the massive sand dunes sculpted by relentless onshore winds.

Leaving Pouto we headed northwards with views of the extensive Kaipara

Harbour and distant views of Lakes Swan and Humuhumu. The return to Onerahi in a fogged-up bus provided only limited opportunities to continue observations.

Despite the weather participants enjoyed visiting this remote part of Northland, well known for its beach-wrecked seabirds.

DAVID CROCKETT

Trounson Park and Waipoua

At 8.30 am on 1 June, fourteen enthusiastic and raincoat-clad people set out on a small tourist bus to do a round trip to Dargaville, Trounson Park, Waipoua Forest, Rawene, Kaikohe and home down the main south highway. As we peered through the fogged up windows we saw the rain-drenched farmland, fog-bound hills and the Wairoa River flowing true to form - upside down: "too thick to drink and too thin to plough".

Thanks to Lorna Simpkin and the bus driver, everyone got the run-down on the areas as we went along, even though it was difficult to see. However there seemed to be plenty of chatter about among the passengers as we went.

Morning tea was shared with the rain at Trounson Park. We all went on a refreshing walk here, and some of us were fortunate to see a harrier taking off across our path and through the undergrowth to the forest perimeter. Our forest was being viewed at its best and even masses of fungi were showing up along the track, much to everyone's interest.

The next stop was the Waipoua lookout. Our normally expansive views were very limited, but those who climbed the lookout managed a sight of some of the forest area.

It was disappointing to find that our speakers from DoC at the Waipoua headquarters were at a tangi. We spent

some time looking at the shop and museum area, and we then had a break for lunch in the hall at the headquarters. Except for the odd Fantail, all other birds were making themselves scarce. Obviously they were making themselves secure from the cyclone which was moving in from the north.

After a visit to Tane Mahuta and viewing the vegetation and fungi about us, we boarded the bus and headed northwards to the Hokianga, where the rain was heavier and our vision was restricted, which was disappointing as we were unable to show off our birdlife on the Hokianga Harbour.

Our final stop was a Rawene, where we dropped into the Boathouse Cafe. The journey home saw a further deterioration in the weather, but maybe this was a way of saying "Come back again and see our birdlife in the sunny north".

MARGARET DOWDELL

Mystery Trip

The weather was unkind and promising worse. Finally the bus arrived - it wasn't late, we weren't due to leave until 0900. First stop - supermarket. I didn't notice any birds but the biscuits were nice.

We headed towards Whangarei, then north. Stuart kept noticing the odd bird along the way. Out onto the old Russell road, discussing our wild ginger.

We turned down to Oakura, stopped at the southern end. There were a pair of Variable Oystercatchers, and a few people with umbrellas walking the beach.

Back to the bus, and on to Punaruku, down the side road. Left the bus and walked along the forestry road, didn't leave the track as there was 1080 laid. I caught a fleeting glimpse of a Tomtit, a few Silvereyes and Fantails, but most birds had taken shelter elsewhere. Back to the bus and heading out towards Bland Bay. Stop! One of our South Island friends

still trying to look out the window spotted something. Backed up. Yes, there they were, two Brown Teal, sitting on the water, doing what they ought to. On to Whangaruru North, lunch stop. Most headed out for a walk in the rain. A White-fronted Tern and some shags were seen. After this, people could discuss the relative merits of various brands of raincoats.

Back to Whangarei, down to the port. Looked at one of the pond - about 50 Royal Spoonbills huddled at the far end. Puddled around in the mud, back to the bus and so to Onerahi.

Pity about the weather, but thanks Tony Beauchamp and driver.

JEAN HAWKEN

Scientific Day

The last day of May was also Science Talks Day at this year's OSNZ AGM and conference, held within the solid walls of the Onerahi Hotel in the far north city of Whangarei. Unlike last year's meeting at Foxton Beach there were no gaps in the planks with Arctic cold air whistling, nor even an earthquake to shake things up, but there was an over-active cooling system (at least near the back of the room) to get the troops toughened up for the field trip day.

The talks were a good mix of interesting topics. Tony Beauchamp did a good job of keeping things on track and lively. A few quick statistics (I couldn't resist!). The talks by habitat were: sea and shore 4, lakes or river 3, islands 3 and bush 1. Water, water everywhere... The men significantly outnumbered women as speakers 9 to 2 - a definitely skewed sex ration in science-speak.

Appropriately several talks highlighted activities in Northland. The audience was updated on the results of many years of beach patrols on the west coast of Northland, surveys of Pouto lakes (revealing they provide habitat for some endemics such as NZ Dabchick, scaup and shoveler, along with other established and introduced species), and bird studies on the Chicken Islands (examining the results of removing kiore - looking better without kiore).

Three talks covered large geographical areas; the results of the Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern survey, trans-hemisphere wader migration, and the establishment and spread of Royal Spoonbills in New Zealand (a species full of mystery, especially for such large and majestic birds. Take home message - do, do, DO remember to look for bands if you spot one). The audience was treated to a map of New Zealand's top wader spots, how New Zealand fits into the East Asian-Australasian flyway and Shorebird Reserve Network, which waders species occur here in high numbers, and the

movements (sometimes quite amazing) of "our" shorebirds. Some interesting tidbits of information from the national surveys revealed that Canterbury and Southland are the two main areas for nesting Black-billed Gulls (over 80%), and numbers of White-fronted Terns are estimated to be between 4,700-8,500 (but with some areas needing more coverage).

Several declining and/or endangered species were covered in the programme, including Fairy Terns and the work underway to turn around their low numbers, attempts to transfer Shore Plovers (they seem to have minds of their own on this matter, with a disconcerting habit of flying off the island they are placed on, but it's obvious the team members are increasing their knowledge rapidly), and the on-going sad tale of the decline of Brown Kiwi in Northland. Fortunately for all these species it became apparent from the talks that good progress is being made into understanding the problems and using this information to improve management efforts.

Finally there was a talk about the fascinating lifestyles of Weka on different islands (they fight on Kapiti, vigorously defending territories, but not on Kawau) and the sources for the study of historical ornithology in the south Pacific (including a sad lesson from Tahiti about how things have changed).

All in all a most delightful and informative (if sometimes chilly) session. Many thanks to all the speakers and the chair for the work they did to make this a very rewarding day.

FRANCES SCHMECHEL

The annual Scientific Day talks in conjunction with the AGM were held on 31 May in Onerahi, Whangarei. Tony Beauchamp introduced the session with some comments on the problems with Red-billed Gulls at the refinery at Marsden Point and the methods that were used to remove nesting birds from a coliform sensitive discharge lake. Plastic owls were found to be the best deterrent.

Ralph Powlesland reported the findings of the past two annual surveys of breeding colonies of White-fronted Terns and Black-billed Gulls. The presentation showed how difficult it was to interpret some of the information and Ralph requested clarification on the search methods and follow-up in some regions. There were differences between the years which may have reflected weather patterns or acquired knowledge between the years. Council has approved another survey next year.

Richard Parrish followed with an account on the trials and successes with Fairy Tern breeding and post breeding surveys in Northland. Over the past few years staff have been employed to protect the breeding sites and to get information on predation and nest losses. Recent

successes in nest movement and captive hatching have been tempered by the weather, especially the cyclones and high tides.

Prue Cozens reported findings from one of Northland's longest running programmes - the 25 years of monthly beach patrols south of the Maunganui Bluffs. Prue concentrated on the major wrecks of petrels and shearwaters, comparing average numbers per kilometre with seasonal averages. She concluded that some years, like 1975, were particularly bad and produced major wrecks of prions, Antarctic Fulmars, Sooty Shearwaters and diving petrels. Fairy Prions were the most common major wreck with six occurrences. It has been eleven years since a major wreck.

David Medway reported on the first European knowledge of Pacific island avifauna, which initially emanated from the three voyages of Captain James Cook between 1768-80. The records from these voyages are the essential basis of ornithology in these areas. However many of the species discovered then are now endangered or extinct. The sources of knowledge are the journals, manuscripts, drawings and specimens kept, made or collected by a number of participants on these voyages. Many drawings and specimens are the basis of the first valid description of birds. Most specimens had a chequered history and few survive. David described the location of important elements of the literature and where to find them.

Shaarina Boyd took on the task of reporting on a team effort by the Department of Conservation to re-establish Shore Plovers on the New Zealand mainland. The project team initially looked for an island similar to Rangatira in the Chatham Islands and selected Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf. Shaarina reported that the Shore Plovers were not so fussy and, apart from eight, have decided to do some exploring of the Hauraki Gulf, using habitats not found on Rangatira. In addition unforeseen problems like Morepork and harrier predation were encountered.

The morning session ended with a presentation by Peter Schweigman on the current status of breeding sites and winter distribution of Royal Spoonbills. Peter has made regular reports to members in *OSNZ News* and is preparing this presentation for *Notornis*.

The afternoon session commenced with Adrian Riegen giving a breakdown of the nine countries with shorebird network sites, and those most important in New Zealand for waders. Each site had to meet the Ramsar criterion of holding 20,000 shorebirds or 1% of the flyway population. Staging sites are as important as wintering or breeding sites. New Zealand has two network sites in the Firth of Thames and Farewell Spit. Doug Watkins is the coordinator in Canberra, and he facilitates the formation of sites and, where possible, the joint

management by government and non-government organisations.

Hugh Robertson reported on the experimental design of the North Island Brown Kiwi programme in Northland and the impact of stoats on kiwi chick survival. Predator trapping had dramatically improved survivorship of young kiwi. Hugh had just released juvenile kiwi at ages and sizes considered to be beyond the highest risk of stoat predation as part of the Kiwi Recovery Plan.

Ray Pierce gave a presentation on the problems of conservation of Pycroft's Petrel on the Chickens Islands off Whangarei. Recent removal of kiore from Lady Alice and Whatupuke Islands has led to a breeding recovery of Pycroft's Petrels. However there are still significant problems with burrow competition and overlap with Little Shearwaters which poses interesting management problems.

David Crockett spoke about the Pouto lakes system at the North Kaipara Head, covering the changes in the levels of the lakes and their dynamic nature as changes have occurred in land use. He also alluded to problems with multiple bed ownership. The study will continue for another two years before analysis and publication.

Finally Tony Beauchamp considered the problems of Weka territoriality and home range, contrasting the cost and benefits of the highly territorial situation on Kapiti Island with the overlapping home range structure on Kawau Island. Weka had similar behaviour and calls, but members of each population used them for different purposes. The territorial systems and habitat use differences resulted in significant differences in timing of pair bond establishment and the number of pairs breeding each year. The factors impacting on individual survival were different. Kapiti Island was a more stable environment, lacking the periodic catastrophic drought impacts found on Kawau.

The organisers would like to thank those who contributed to the success of the programme and those who attended.

TONY BEAUCHAMP

Far North Field Trip

When the AGM and associated tropical cyclone adjourned, 14 rather damp individuals decamped and fled north. Land north of Whangarei, and all the way to Kaitaia, lay under inches of water. Roads at Kaeo, and our first destination at Lake Ohia, were under water. Our planned beach patrol of Ninety Mile Beach was scrapped due to unpredictable sweeping waves on shore. After a lunch stop at Laurie and Alison Howell's Kaitaia home, the Great Spoonbill Hunt began at Unahi on the southern shores of Rangaunu Harbour.



Participants on the Far North Field trip 2-4 June 1997.

Photo: Paul Cuming

142 birds (*Spatulate schweigmani*?) were perched on some macrocarpas. It wasn't long before Bev 'that bird is banded' Woolley clocked up the first colour banded spoonbill - the first of approximately forty banded birds seen during the trip. Peter Schweigman's grin just kept getting wider!

For the next two days the group swarmed over the peninsula, taking in remote localities such as Paua and Te Hapua on the Parengarenga Harbour, Houhora Heads and our base camp, Waitiki Landing, about 20 kilometres south of Cape Reinga. Fernbirds were seen at Paua, while a tame Kotuku named Heck was taking in the scenery at Houhora.

The spoonbill colony at Nilsson's dam on the Parengarenga was visited, with one bird present and some nests visible perched in dead trees which were partly underwater, victims of the dam.

The colony was quite unlike the raised glasswort beds of Vernon Lagoons near Blenheim, and the tall, live trees at Okarito.

Some of us visited Cape Reinga, marvelling at the spiritual aura of the place, as well as spectacular views. Pipits were enjoying the sunshine here, and at nearby Tapotupotu Bay. This beach revealed one dead White-headed Petrel and dozens of seabirds offshore. We returned to Waitiki that day to see coveys of Brown Quail scurrying about.

The poor spoonbills weren't left alone for the final day - they were positively hounded! The blitz covered from Parengarenga in the north to Rangaunu in the south. The simultaneous count netted over 250 birds, so these beautiful white birds have certainly invaded the north in big numbers. Otago birds were seen, much to Peter's delight - long distance travellers like himself.

Unfortunately another planned activity was cancelled due to the weather

- a boat trip on Rangaunu Harbour. On nearby Lake Rotokawau resided over 25 Australian Little Grebes and about four NZ Dabchicks.

We left the Far North for Kerikeri where eight of us were entertained by Stuart and Alison Chambers on Northland's best kept accommodation secret - Aroha Island. During the stay bitterns, kiwi and Reef Herons were spotted, and a crake, minus the spots, was heard. Thanks to Alison and Stuart, and to Lindsay Charman who, on the second night, taught us how to listen for kiwi. Aroha Island has a pair, possibly two.

Thanks to Northland OSNZ for planning the field trip, to the Howells for a superb catering job and local knowledge, along with Far North RR, Janet Snell and David Crockett.

PAUL CUMING

Gull and Tern Survey - Preliminary Results

The information from the 1996/97 survey is in the attached table, along with that from 1995/96 for comparison. The ?s in the table indicate that I don't know whether the site was not counted (NC) or no birds were found nesting there (0). If any member has information for either of the summer surveys not recorded or recorded incorrectly in the table, would they please let me know.

The increased coverage in 1996/97 is pleasing, with colonies found at several new locations. I thank all those that took part for their efforts, especially to those that organised the regional surveys.

The total of about 48,000 nesting pairs of Black-billed Gulls is nearly 5,000 (11%) up on the previous season's total. However, not too much can be made of this because nearly 12,000 pairs were

counted on the Maitua River in Southland that was not checked the previous year. The total of about 8,800 pairs of nesting White-fronted Terns in 1996/97 is 83% greater than the previous season's tally. Most regions found more nesting terns in the second season. Considering the Northland and Nelson results where the survey effort was reasonably consistent for both seasons, the number of pairs found nesting has increased by 160% and 125% respectively for those regions in 1996/97. Going against the trend was Marlborough, where the tally declined by about 20% in the second season.

The difference in total pairs of Black-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns nesting in 1995/96 and 1996/97 is the result of a number of factors. These include more pairs attempting to nest in 1996/97 than during the previous season for whatever reason, increasing organisational skills and knowledge of observers as a result of experience so that more colonies were found in the second season, and the influence of frequent stormy weather and perhaps predators, such that fewer pairs were nesting in the first season when colony sites were checked.

Because the totals for the two seasons are quite different, joint discussions of Councillors and Regional Representatives at the Whangarei AGM/Conference concluded that the survey should be repeated for a third (and final) season in 1997/98. Funding is to be made available to regions to assist with costs, such as plane and boat hire, and petrol for cars. I'm hopeful that members will be willing to repeat their efforts of 1996/97, when a fairly complete survey for colonies of both species on and about the main islands was carried out.

RALPH POWLESLAND
Gull/Tern Survey Convenor

Black-billed Gull

Numbers of nests:

	1995/96	1996/97
Northland	0	0
Auckland		
Rat Island	3	18
Shell Island	9	0
South Auckland		
Kidds	26	0
Miranda	80	130
Mataitai, Wairoa R.	?	10
	106	140
Waikato	0	0
Taranaki	0	0
Volcanic Plateau		
Sulphur Point, Rotorua	166	c.95
Gisborne-Wairoa		
Portland Island	17	c.246

Bay of Plenty			Te Hue Point	5	0
Ohiwa Harbour	0	c.30	Elliot's Bay	17	0
Hawkes Bay			Hokianga Harbour	3	0
Napier Wharf	c.20	0	Whangarei Harbour	50	96
Wanganui	0	0	Mangahai Estuary	3	18
Manawatu			Guano Rock	0	12
Manawatu/Mangahou Rs			Bream Tail Stack	0	50
c.10		NC	Middle Stack (Chickens)		
Wairarapa	0	0			4
Wellington	0	0	Te Kura Rocks	0	150
Nelson			Cone Rock	0	8
Buller/Howard Rs	c.75	0	Nukutanga Is (Cavallis)		
Upper Matakaitaki R	c.10	?			6
Motueka R	?	70	Opunga Cove	0	23
	c.85	70	Motutohe Is	0	6
Marlborough				c.449	1177
Upper Buller R	82	?	Auckland		
Wairau Bridge	c.200	?	Rat Island	58	190+
Ure R Mouth	5	?	Okahu Bay	94	152
Sugarloaf Point,			Shell Is	36	0
Kaikoura	0	yes	Karekare	40	65
Kahutara R mouth	?	flooded	Muriwai	70	68
	c.287	?	Waiheke Is	4	150
West Coast	0	0	Papakanui	300	900
Canterbury			Great Barrier Is	16	22
Conway R	c.1000	649	Tiritiri Matangi Is	0	150+
Waiau R	973 (3)	1624 (2)	Rakino Is	0	19
Hurunui R	278	3+	Ponui Is	?	76
Ashley R	383	257 (2)	Motuihe Is	0	11
Waimakiriri R	?	91	Half Moon Bay marina		
Peacock Springs	0	78	Tawharanui Reg. Park	?	9
Rakaia R	4	732 (2)			206
Ashburton R	c.3865 (3)	7686 (4)	Noises Islands	?	268
Orari R	c.1200	?		c.650	2304
Opihi R	c.3824 (2)	1063 (3)	South Auckland		
Opuha Dam	?	1409	Kidds	92	0
Ahuriri R	195 (2)	?	Miranda	71	295
Tekapo R	c.25	?	Alderman Islands	25	?
Cass R	c.10	?	Sand Is	0	c.225
Tasman R	c.10	?		188+	c.520
	c.11767	c.13592	Coromandel		
Otago			Taranua	?	30
Waitaki R	c.952 (2)	?	Ruamahunga	?	1
Matukituki R	?	296 (2)	Korapuki Is	?	35
	c.952	296	Hikanui	?	75
Southland				?	142
Aparima R	c.12030 (10)	c.7785 (3)	Waikato		
Oreti R	c.16737 (5)	c.9091 (5-6)	Woody Head	34+	39+
Waiau R	c.446	c.4635 (3)	Taharoa	10+	c.150
Upukerora R	c.178	?	Albatross Point	NC	83
Mararoa R	c.178	?		44+	c.272
Maitua R	NC	c.11963	Taranaki		
	c.29569	c.33474	Port Taranaki	57	0
TOTALS	c.43000	c.48000	Pararaki Islet	0	c.40
			Other Sugarloaf Islets		
				NC	53
			Tongaporutu R stacks	0	c.20
				57	c.113
			Volcanic Plateau	0	0
			Gisborne-Wairoa		
			Long Point	c.25	?
			Marau Point	c.35	c.55
			Portland Is	c.750	c.275 (2)
			Wairoa R estuary	?	93
				c.810	c.423
			Bay of Plenty		
			Sulphur Point	89	94
			Waiau Estuary	0	c.300

White-fronted Tern

Numbers of nests:

	1995/96	1996/97
Northland		
Three Kings Islands	50+	NC
Moturoa Islands	50	100
Walker Is	133	523
Mahinepua Peninsula	1	0
Black Rocks	33	172
Tapeka Point	57	9
Motutara Is	47	0

Maketu Spit	0	2	Cosy Nook	?	c.100
Whale Is	NC	c.100	Bird Is, Waituna	?	c.100
Ohiwa	0	c.100	Big Solander Is	NC	c.25
	89	c.596		c.238	c.425
Hawkes Bay			TOTALS	c.4800	c.8800
Napier Wharf	c.15	c.6			
Ngaruroro R	1	?			
Porangahau Estuary	c.50	0			
Waitangi Estuary	0	c.600			
Cape Kidnappers	?	0			
	c.66	c.606			
Wanganui	0	0			
Manawatu	0	0			
Wairarapa					
Castle Point	c.75	c.100			
Onoke Spit	0	183			
near Tora	?	yes			
	c.75	c.283			
Wellington					
Ward Island	36	30			
Kapiti Island	17	65			
Mana Island	NC	95			
	53	190			
Nelson					
Bells Island	185	0			
White Rocks	38	21			
Bird Is	65	83			
Cherwode Islands	97	60			
South Trio	34	20			
D'Urville Is plus	5	22			
Nelson Boulder Bank	0	c.400			
Cable Bay	?	c.70			
Motueka Sandspit	0	c.200			
Jag Rocks	0	c.50			
Croisilles Harbour	0	29			
	424	c.955			
Marlborough					
Coast Road, Kaikoura	2+	0			
First Tunnel, Kaikoura	c.33	0			
Barney's Rock, Kaikoura	132	1			
Ure R mouth	155	0			
Otumatu Rock	0	3			
Ohau Point, Kaikoura	0	154+			
Paratitahi Tunnel,					
Kaikoura	0	6			
Goose Bay, Kaikoura	0	1			
Irongate Stream,					
Kaikoura	0	6			
Sugarloaf Is, Kaikoura	0	1			
Kaikoura Peninsula	0	86+			
	c.322	c.258			
West Coast					
Punakaiki	30+	20			
Oparara Estuary	?	c.200			
	30+	220+			
Canterbury					
Rakaia R mouth	13	?			
Ashley R	192	137?			
Hurunui R mouth	?	25+			
	205	162+			
Otago					
Waitaki R	c.968	?			
Long Beach	120	32			
Doctor's Point	?	120			
	c.1088	152			
Southland					
Jacob's R estuary	c.50	0			
Joey's Island	168	0			
New R estuary	20	100			
Waiau Bar	?	100			



Fairy Tern Recovery Programme

The 1996/97 breeding season was a disappointing one for Fairy Terns. To quote Richard Parrish "it was an unusual season right from the start". Few pairs nested (four in total), and the first egg was laid later in the season (around 27 November). In recent years the earliest nesting attempt has been on 13 November.

B-M and G-M nested on the spit at Mangawhai Wildlife Refuge. Incubation seemed to pass without a hitch and two healthy chicks hatched on 20 December. Both chicks grew rapidly and were approximately eight and nine days old when Cyclone Fergus hit on 29 December. Both chicks were highly mobile and were left with their parents. Two days later they were gone. B-M and G-M were seen searching the area for the following two days. The chicks were never located and are presumed to have died.

A second pair (both unbanded) nested on the island at Mangawhai on 27 December. They laid one egg and when Cyclone Fergus hit they had been incubating for only two days. The pair are thought to have continued incubation during the cyclone, but when the egg was candled at twelve days it was found to be non-viable.

At Waipu Wildlife Refuge WB-M and an unbanded bird nested on the seaward side of the spit on 13 December. The nest was sand-bagged to provide protection from the tide during Cyclone Fergus, and one egg was taken to Whangarei for incubation in captivity as a precautionary measure. Cyclone Fergus devastated the sandspits at both Waipu and Mangawhai. The egg which remained at Waipu was washed by the tide and chilled. The developing chick perished within the egg. Incubation of the other egg was continued in Whangarei and the chick hatched on 8 January. It was transferred into the nest of the unbanded pair at Mangawhai on 9 January.

Several brooding changeovers were witnessed and the pair appeared to accept the chick. However on the morning of

10 January, upon arrival at the nest site there was no sign of the chick. The parents were roosting 30 metres inland. Cyclone Drena arrived that day. Later viewing of the video footage revealed that the chick had died during the night. Exactly what happened to its body remains a mystery.

At Papakanui Spit the breeding attempts of an unbanded pair met with the same misfortune. A two egg nest was detected on 28 November. The pair incubated for almost three weeks until the eggs disappeared overnight on 13 December. The disappearance was within the window of time in which the eggs were expected to hatch, so it is possible that newly hatched chicks were lost. Predation was the suspected cause. A second nest, presumed to have come from the same pair, was detected on 26 December. The nest was deserted during extreme weather conditions during Cyclone Fergus. The egg was transported to Auckland Zoo where it was incubated for several days before it was determined to be infertile.

It is thought that no Fairy Tern chicks fledged in New Zealand during the 1996/97 breeding season. This was an extremely disappointing and disheartening result for all concerned, particularly the three Shorebird Protection Officers Andrea Booth, Doug Campbell and myself.

A Fairy Tern Recovery Group meeting was held in Whangarei on 14 April. In one day the group nussed out the direction for the Recovery Programme and the Recovery Plan for the next five years. I believe the Recovery Plan is a strong pro-active document based on the great wealth of knowledge and experience held by those people who attended the meeting, and that it will play a positive role on the recovery of the species. Richard Parrish was unanimously elected Recovery Group Leader during the meeting.

In addition a Fairy Tern database is currently being developed, which will incorporate information on the breeding attempts, sightings and plumage/morphology of the New Zealand Fairy Tern. So if you have any information on Fairy Terns in your OSNZ notebooks please send them to Richard Parrish for inclusion in the database.

Post breeding monitoring was carried out during the autumn months by DoC staff and eager OSNZers. Although no chicks were produced this season, the post breeding surveys allowed us to monitor the survivorship of adult and immature birds. Six post breeding surveys were carried out and a minimum of four individuals and a maximum of 26 individuals were sighted on any given day. Eighteen birds were positively identified, including five unbanded birds. Three banded birds were notably absent, and the five chicks banded during the 1995/96 season.

We are approaching the 1997/98 season with a positive and enthusiastic outlook. Northland and Auckland groups of OSNZers who wish to be actively involved in the Fairy Tern Recovery Programme are being organised by Audrey Williams (09 437 6041) and Gwenda Pulham (09 480 5535). Contact them if you would like to help.

Some dates for the up and coming season are 5-7 December - breeding census of all potential and known sites in Auckland and Northland, and 18-19 April - post breeding census of these sites. Anyone wishing to participate is invited. Accommodation has been booked at Tapora. For further information contact me at Northland DoC on 09 438 0299.

I would like to thank all those people, DoC staff and Northland and Auckland OSNZ members, who have given their time, energy and enthusiasm to the New Zealand Fairy Tern Recovery Programme. The road to recovery for Fairy Terns is going to be long and full of obstacles, but if we all pull together and work as a team we might just be able to get these little birds back on track!

LEIGH HONNOR



From the President's Desk

When one is continuously surrounded by acting positional roles and reviews, there is a tendency to find life a little theatrical. Since I last contemplated my presidential pen I have been able to make a short visit to RAOU HQ in Melbourne (to study their website operation and hear about progress on the Handbook) while over there on a real theatrical visit. Then back across the ditch with a drive the length of the North Island to the AGM and a vagaries of a Northland inundated with ornithologists on annual migration and a late tropical cyclone.

The AGM was as always an interesting event and well reported in this and the last *OSNZ News*. A grateful thanks from the Society to all those from the region who worked hard to make the weekend run smoothly. Wellington is the venue for next year and planning is already well advanced - details should be in your December *OSNZ News*.

Members have had a good opportunity this year to view the north and its ornithological sights through the Field Course and Conference. Both had cyclonic weather events. Both also seemed to generate some elements of a parochial regionalism which seems to

have little place in a society dedicated to the study and dissemination of information about birds. While misunderstandings can and do occur within any group of enthusiastic people, they need to be resolved reasonably, being aware of the facts and without prejudice or acrimony by those who have the problem. Our resources as a society are not so plentiful that we can afford the luxury of confusion in the way we operate national and local activities. The introduction of the events calendar on the *OSNZ News* back page is designed to, at least in part, prevent duplication and improve communication.

Communication has been very much an issue in my mind over the past few months. I must apologise if I have been somewhat slow to respond on some matters, but the needs of structural changes in DoC as well as having to chair two publications reviews at the same time have overflowed into all available moments. After a slow start there was a very significant response from members and others to our OSNZ publications review. At least 250 individuals responded in some form or other. About half of these responded via a short survey form originally designed by the Auckland region. The resultant heap of paper was a challenge to your review team. Their recommendations will be made to the September Council meeting.

Most of the recommended changes should result in a clearer understanding of the processes that we need to operate to publish the Society products and so more clearly identify the products themselves and their content. There may not be many obvious changes immediately, as some will take a little time to plan and organise. However, one of the first will probably be the clearer and darker type in this issue of *Notornis* and *OSNZ News*. I know this has troubled some members.

The issue of communication is paramount throughout all Society activity. Many ornithologists are keen workers in small groups or on their own. The challenge is always to let others know what you have been up to or are planning to do. In this area, *OSNZ News* as the society magazine will be what you as members contribute. Many submissions asked for more illustrations. Many members are taking photographs all of the time during their studies, interesting aspects of field trips etc. On the principle that each picture is worth a thousand words, then every picture you submit should be an easier product than the writing of the words. The Editor can only publish the material provided. If you want a news magazine with plenty of illustrations etc, then you as members must play your part.

For instance there is always a number of news items or articles in newspapers and magazines round the country on birds. These are important sources of information - often of rarities. How about

offering yourself as a correspondent (clippings from your region). This is something which could suit a less active person, and possibly reveal people in the community who might like to have some contact with the Society. What about some contributions from those budding artists out there? Design a bird logo for your region to identify your part of the country in *OSNZ News*. I know some members are already becoming regular surfers of the Web, and some even have their own Web pages. How about reporting your 'birding finds' in a regular Web corner - all things to foster an interest in birds. It probably means that even on a wet day there may be things that you can find and share with others.

It is science fair time again. We have just awarded a prize to a marvellous 4th former from Tawa College combining records of birds at sea in Cook Strait with beach patrol records. Great to hear that a Society scheme has been used in such a way. It only goes to show that it is never too young to start, always good to record what you see, and imperative that it be shared with others.

Welcome to the newcomers to the Society. The mail bag seems to have had a steady stream of new members recently, and the present membership is the highest it has been in June for many years. Congratulations! Spring is coming and another birding summer is on the way. If it is going to be a significant El Nino event, look for strange things which might affect birds, their behaviour or their habitats. Keep the Editors busy, enjoy your birding, and be willing to do something for your Society - don't leave it to other people to entertain you. Share the good ideas with your RRs and give them a hand without having to be asked. Above all, communicate!

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

President

Minutes - AGM 1997

The following are the MINUTES OF THE FIFTY SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND HELD AT WHANGAREI, NORTHLAND ON 31 MAY 1997, commencing at 7.30 pm.

PRESENT: Christopher Robertson, President, and 75 members.

APOLOGIES: Paul Sagar, Alan and Connie Wright, Mel Galbraith, Folkert and Shirley Nieuwland, Enfys Graham, Reg and Shane Cotter, Russell Thomas, Michael Bell, Brian Boeson, Raewyn Empson, Tenick Dennison, Audrey Gordon, Peter Gaze, Brian, Sue and David Bell and the Bell family, Kerry Oates, Hugh Clifford, Mike and Sharon Graham, Geoff Foreman, Bruce Stewart-Menteath

It was moved that the apologies be accepted (D. MEDWAY/ H.HARTY)
CARRIED

DEPARTED FRIENDS: A period of silence was observed for the deaths of noted Society members during the year - Gavin Woodward, Raewyn Smith and Max Falconer.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES: As the minutes of the 1996 AGM had been circulated, it was proposed that they be taken as read and adopted.
(M. NEE/ J. ROWE) CARRIED

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: As there was only one nomination for North Island Vice President, David Crockett was elected unopposed. As there was only one nomination for South Island Vice President, Paul Sagar was elected unopposed.

There were four nominations received for three council positions. These were circulated in December 1996 and a postal ballot was held which closed on 16 May 1997 with 133 valid

votes counted. Hazel Harty, Derek Onley and Graeme Taylor were declared elected.

The meeting agreed to a motion that the ballot papers be destroyed.

(B. WOOLLEY/ T. CROCKER)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: In addition to his annual report which had been circulated, the President gave an update on a number of issues:

Field Courses: Gwenda Pulham was thanked for her work in organising the very successful field course at the Kaipara during January of this year. It is proposed to hold field courses on a rotational basis starting with a Junior Course in January 1999 followed by a South Island course and a North Island course in the following two years.

Field Studies: The wide range of field studies in regions was commented on though it was noted that many of the schemes, surveys and censuses are related to bird counts.

Society Schemes: It was remarked that for a number of reasons, Beach Patrol, Nest Record and Moulting Schemes show a decline in support over recent years.

Meetings of Regional Representatives and Council: RRs and Council met in joint and separate meetings for the second year running, a process which it is hoped will develop further in the coming years. Recommendations from RRs were able to be dealt with by Council at their final meeting.

Membership Changes: An enquiry into membership changes by Russell Thomas has revealed that 30% of new members joining the Society have left after one year and 55% after three years. It is not yet clear why this is so, but may reflect what is happening in some other societies. More young members are needed.

National Gull and Tern Survey: This survey will continue for a third year to optimise the results already obtained, particularly in the second year.

Trial Scheme for New Atlas: Council and RRs approved a two year pilot scheme, based on a limited number of bird species, as a lead-in to the new atlas project. It is hoped to get the scheme under way by 1 January 1998, dependent on finding a suitable person to administer it, and the money to fund it. A decision will be made at the Council meeting in September.

OSNZ News: This publication has increased in size with new sections being added. Tony Crocker and everyone who has contributed were congratulated on some very good issues.

Notornis: A special issue on waders is planned as one of the journal parts for 1998. It will be a memorial issue to Dick Sibson, Jenny Hawkins and Barrie Heather.

Internet and Website: A Society website is being considered, dependent on finding someone to set it up and keep it up to date.

Publications Review: A committee has been set up to review all OSNZ publications. It will meet in August and report to Council in time for the September meeting. Submissions close at the end of June. Members were strongly urged to contribute so that a consensus may be reached.

Educational Publications: The Society will consider updating/publishing or looking for a replacement for *A Biology of Birds*, originally by Barrie Heather, after a request from RRs for a basic book on birds. The Society is also working towards organising an education programme for schools.

Rare Birds Committee: A backlog of submissions is being worked through and the committee's decisions are due to be published shortly in *Notornis*. Members were reminded to make sure that all rare bird sightings are sent in to the committee.

Liaison Appointments: Three liaison appointments have been made: Professor Euan Young with the Universities, David Lawrie with the Fish and Game Council, and Keith Woodley with the Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

Timing of Conference: Council will look into whether changes are needed to hold conference during July school holidays or possibly some other time of year, to facilitate finding reasonable venues and accommodation.

HANZAB Volumes: Inquiries will be made to the RAOU concerning discounts on these books to OSNZ members.

Retiring Councillors: The thanks of the Society were expressed to two retiring councillors, Ralph Powlesland and Gabor Lovei. G Lovei's term as editor of *Notornis* is extended to the end of the year pending the results of the publications review.

It was moved that the President's report be accepted.

(B. SEDDON / D. CROCKETT)
CARRIED

FINANCIAL REPORT: As the financial report had previously been circulated and as there was no discussion, it was moved that it be adopted.

(M. NEE / J. ROWE)
CARRIED

NOTICE OF MOTION 1 - Winding up / Liquidation

Due to an amendment to the Incorporated Societies Act 1908, in 1993, which was overlooked when reviewing the Constitution, the following motion, duly moved and seconded (D. MEDWAY/ C. ROBERTSON) was put to the meeting:

That the existing Clause 18 of the Constitution be deleted and replaced by:

18 LIQUIDATION

18.1 The Society may be put into liquidation in the manner provided by Section 24 of the Incorporated Societies Act 1908.

18.2 In the event of the Society being put into liquidation the surplus assets and funds after payment of the Society's liabilities and the expenses of liquidation shall be disposed of within New Zealand in one or more of the following ways:

18.2.1 By transfer of the surplus assets and funds to any charitable body or organisation whose objects are in whole or in part similar to those of the Society; or
18.2.2 For the purposes of study and research in the field of zoology and the study of animals in their environment, or

18.2.3 In any other charitable purpose decided by the Members and approved by the Royal Society of New Zealand or its successor.

18.3 Provided, however, that under no circumstances shall any part of the income or other funds of the Society be used directly or indirectly for the private pecuniary benefit of any Member of the Society.

AND: The contents list at the beginning of the Constitution should also be consequently amended to:

18 LIQUIDATION

As there was no discussion the motion was put to the meeting and
CARRIED.

NOTICE OF MOTION 2 - Annual Subscription.

It was moved and seconded (M. NEE / H. HARTY) that:

The annual subscription rate for all classes of membership paying subscriptions be increased by 12.5% and that the increased rate apply from 1 January 1998.

Discussion: S Chambers queried whether there was a relationship between loss of members and higher subscriptions. The President replied that there were no rises in subscriptions that could be tied to a drop in membership, rather that membership had fallen off in a gentle decline. The Treasurer cited falling revenue not higher spending when clarifying a point raised by C. Scadden on the financial situation. W. Ringer spoke for increasing the membership. H Cook inquired whether investments from Life memberships are sufficient to cover the costs of servicing those members. The Treasurer replied that investments are continually being reviewed to realise the best returns. B. Seddon advocated more publicity.

There being no further discussion the motion was put to the meeting and CARRIED.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Field Guide Author

A special commendation was made to Hugh Robertson for his work as a Field guide author and to all those members who contributed to the guide through many records such as those from the Nest Record Scheme. Hugh was offered all the copies that he does not possess to make up a full set of *Notornis*.

A.T. Edgar Junior Award

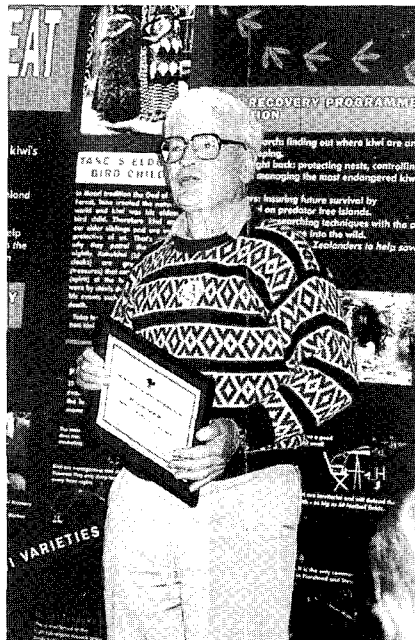
Christopher Garden and Jamie Wood, both of Southland were the joint recipients of the A.T. Edgar Junior Award for 1997. Lloyd Esler accepted the awards on behalf of Jamie and Christopher and outlined some of their ornithological activities.

Robert Falla Memorial Award

The President announced David Edgar Crockett to be the recipient of the Robert Falla Memorial Award for 1997, to a standing ovation from the meeting. David, in replying to the President's citation (*OSNZ News* No. 83), expressed gratitude to many people, especially the older generation of ornithologists who had encouraged and assisted him in his lifelong interest in birds.

ELECTION OF FELLOWS

Under the new constitution of the Society (1996), provision was made for the first time for the election of Fellows to the Society. The President took great pleasure in announcing as Fellows of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand - Brian Marples who as a previous Honorary Life Member was automatically appointed a Fellow; Peter Creswick Bull and Evan Graham Turbott as new Fellows. It was an historic occasion. The two citation addresses by the President (*Notornis* 44 : 129-132) and the replies by both the new Fellows, gave the members present a memorable insight



Peter Bull receiving his OSNZ Fellowship.

Photo: Lorna Simpkin

into the early days of the Society and brought closer those members who pioneered the study of birds in NZ in that "golden age of ornithology" when almost everything was still to be discovered.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

New Member's Kit: D. Lawrie commended a recommendation from the meeting of Council and RRs that, to encourage and inform new members, a new member's kit be developed, using an introductory pamphlet and a possible update of the book *A Biology of Birds* originally by Barrie Heather.

Vote of Thanks to RRs: J. Davenport proposed a vote of thanks to the Regional Representatives for all their work in the running of the Society, which was supported by the meeting with acclamation.

Liaison with Official Departments: T. Beauchamp congratulated the Council on appointing Prof. Euan Young as a liaison officer with the universities. He also suggested liaison with people working with birds on ethics committees of official departments.

Conference Organisation: T. Crocker proposed a vote of thanks to the Northland organisers of the weekend, which was supported with acclamation.

Closure and 1998 Conference and AGM.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 10.20 pm, with the post script that Wellington will be the venue for the next Conference and AGM at Queen's Birthday Weekend in 1998.



Graham Turbott at the 1997 AGM.

Photo: Lorna Simpkin



"The Supplication" (- So that's how RR's get results!)

Photo: Lorna Simpkin

Calendar of Events

- 31 July - deadline for nominations for Regional Representative to the Secretary
- 31 August - CSN - deadline for material to CSN coordinators Updated job descriptions to Secretary
- 15 September- Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to the Field Investigations Officer
- 27 September- Council meeting
- 10 November- *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- 31 January - Interim annual reports (RRs, scheme convenors, to Secretary)

- 10 February - *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- 28 February - Notices of Motion and Council nominations - deadline for submissions to Secretary
- 15 April - Projects Assistance Fund - deadline for applications to the Field Investigations Officer
- 30 April - Convenors, RRs, Council annual reports due
- 10 May - *OSNZ News* - deadline for material
- Queen's Birthday Weekend - OSNZ AGM weekend
- 30 June - deadline of nominations for Awards to the Secretary

IOC Assistance - Durban 1998

The New Zealand Ornithological Congress Trust Board is offering travel assistance fellowships valued at NZ\$1,000.00 each for up to two persons to attend and participate in the 22nd International Ornithological Congress to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 16 to 22 August 1998. Registration papers for the Congress can be obtained from the undersigned or from the 22nd IOC home page on <http://www.ioc.org.za> on the internet.

Preference will be given to a) NZ amateur or professional ornithologists who are members of the OSNZ or the Royal Society of New Zealand, or b) post-graduate students from a New Zealand university who are undertaking a topic relevant to the study of birds. Successful applicants will be required to forward to the Board by 30 November 1998 a report of their attendance at the Congress suitable for publication in *OSNZ News*.

Applicants for these fellowships should forward their ornithological CV, reasons for attending the Congress, with supporting letters from two referees not being Board members to:- NZOCTB Travel Fellowship, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. Applications close on 12 December 1997 and decisions of the Board will be advised in January 1998. The Board reserves the right to make no awards.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
Business Manager, NZOCTB

New Members

The Society would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members to the end of 1996:

Narena Olliver, Hilary Aikman, Joan Dunnet, Sunkita Howard, J.F. Puentenes, Laurence Barea, Geoff & Jenny Doring, Toni Cliff, Derrick & Linda Read; and for 1997: Martin Abbott, Wei-Hang Chua, Robbie Holdaway, E.J.G. Munster, Gavin & Rae McGregor, Amelia Oppenheim, Dr R.K. Dell, Kristian Jones, Robyn Skelton, Jenny Whyte, Ted Kitching, John & Marcia Dwyer, Troy Makan, Laura McKinlay, Cate Ryan, R.M.E. Peach, Jason Elsworth, Jereon Lurling, Joanna Sim, Nicola Wallace, B.E. Bishop, H. Greatex, Alec & Marion Milne, Steve McManus, Karrie Rose, C.A.L. Smith, Ed Harvey, Edith Shaw, Sara Treadgold, F.J.L. Nicole, Mr & Mrs Peter Fryer, Rachel Faulkner, Lois Blair, Huakina Development Trust, Sandra King, Claire Winchester, Gina Williams, Jayne Wallace, Brie-Anne Litchfield, Janet & David York, Martin Renner, David Pye, Philip Bengel, Morag Fordham, Mark McGuinness, Wang Godfrey, Christine Friend, Rosemary Gatland, Hildegard Lubake, Claus Yeling Anderson, Lyndon Perriman, Nicholas Allen, Judy Broom, Jaap Knechtmans, Jonathon Colyer, Gren Povall, Brent Beaven, Carolann Wood, Adele Smaill, Graeme Hancock, Rae Nicholls, Anna Reynolds, Rowena West, Paul Gasson, Michael Childs, G. Loh, David Barker.

Overseas: L.H. Cady (UK), Eddie Whalley (UK), B.W.C. & A.D. Adams (UK), Robert Guesten (Germany), Societe d'ornithologie de Polynesie (French Polynesia), National Zoological Park Library (USA), Lloyd Kiff - Peregrine Fund (USA), Dr W. Ross Silcock (USA).

Science Fair winners - Jane Temple, Niklas Moore.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Donations to the Society

All donations to the Society are gratefully accepted. Thank you to the following people:

John & Marcia Dwyer, N.D.R. McKerehan & J.R. Alexander, Nancy Tanner, Martin McGuire, Brie-Anne Litchfield, Michael Childs, Mark Sanders, Gail & Tessa Quayle, Kerry Walshe, Marie Neverman, Mr & Mrs W.J. Campbell, Nicholas Allen, David Barker, N.J. Ledger, Eddie Whalley (UK).

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Sliding On

Funds from the auction of books and art at the 1992 AGM in Masterton helped set up the OSNZ Slide Library. Hundreds of slides later, the collection stands at over 1,000. Recent purchases of equipment to complete the library, and the continued duplicating of slides, have all but exhausted the funds. Slide duplication cost has risen 100% in the last year, which all contributes to the need for alternative funding.

Therefore it has been decided to alter the charge and at the same time streamline the postal system.

The cost of borrowing slides from the Library will be **\$10.00 including postage and packaging**. You may think that this is expensive, yet to take slides - from the film through to processing - well exceeds the new charge, plus you can request as many as you like. You will also be getting quality slides by the likes of Geoff Moon, Brian Chudleigh and Don Hadden, plus many superb shots by "regular" members who are a dab photographic hand. Why sit in a hide for days to capture one nesting bird when you can hire many similar shots in one go?

Possibly RRs could help speakers by meeting this charge - or part of it - from the allowance or from the evening's charge per head?

The new rules will ensure the valuable running of this service in the future.

PAUL CUMING

OSNZ Telescopes

A reminder that the Society, several years ago, invested in a number of telescopes for use by members. RRs have details of where these are held - either by themselves or others - and financial members of the Society are welcome to make use of them, at no charge.

If you have never been a regular telescope user, remember to organise this before your next day out. Birding will never be the same again....

Mentor Scheme - a reminder

The Mentor Scheme was initiated in September 1996, to provide members who have observations or studies remaining in notebooks and folders with assistance, so that their observations are published in *Notornis* or *OSNZ News*. There are over 20 mentors distributed throughout the country who are willing to assist members write up and publish their observations.

Mentors are willing to assist in a variety of ways. You may want advice on how to analyse results or write up at some stages of the procedure, you may require

assistance of some stages of the write-up, or you may prefer that a mentor take full responsibility for such a write-up. In each case there are mentors willing to provide such assistance.

Therefore, if you require help with writing up a study, or putting an observation into words, write to: Mentor Scheme, OSNZ., P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. Please detail the assistance you require and the topic of the observation/study, and every effort will be made to put you in contact with a mentor prepared to provide that assistance.

RALPH POWLESLAND
Mentor Scheme Convenor

Eastern Curlew Migration

Each year between September and March, Australia is host to over two million migratory waders. The largest, the Eastern Curlew, has a world population estimated at 30,000, with up to 90% of that number wintering in Australia. About a third of the population occurs in Moreton Bay and the Great Sandy Strait, the two most important wader sites in eastern Australia.

Curlews pass through staging points on the east Asian-Australasian Flyway such as Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and New Guinea. Although a lot has been learnt about the birds' habits, precise details of the migratory route, the length of time taken to fly the entire distance and where the birds stop to boost their fat reserves along the way has not been known they were.

Eastern Curlews were chosen by the Queensland Wader Study Group for radio-tracking because they are considered large enough to carry the smallest of satellite transmitters. As well, it is considered to be a key biological indicator of the health of wader communities. In mid 1994 the QWSG began a study funded by the then Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage. Radio transmitters for local tracking were built and trialed using a backpack harness. Since late November 1996, QWSG has deployed 30 radio transmitters using a variety of attachment techniques and transmitter sizes on ten species of waders, and their movements have been tracked locally with particular reference to the use of high tide roost sites under the control of the Port of Brisbane Corporation.

The field trials with Eastern Curlews were sufficiently successful for the QWSG (with funds from Environment Australia) to proceed with the use of satellite transmitters in a joint research project with the Wild Bird Society of Japan. Fifteen birds were caught and fitted with their precious cargo in mid February 1997.

Early results from the satellite tracking were greatly influenced by Cyclone Justin in the Coral Sea which raged and meandered about for nearly two weeks. It was the largest cyclone in the region for over fifteen years and at one stage was 1,000 km across. Six birds left at this time and moved quickly to the south east of Papua New Guinea. Two birds returned to Moreton Bay, one to near Princess Charlotte Bay near Cape York Peninsula and one stayed in Papua New Guinea. One bird we know has perished, another almost certainly did, having been located in the eye of the cyclone for several days until contact was lost.

Subsequently other birds left Moreton Bay under better weather conditions. One headed for the Chinese coastline after stopping for a week or so in Taiwan. Early in May another bird arrived in known Eastern Curlew breeding territory in the Amur River basin, about 1,000 km north east of Vladivostok. This bird spent over a week in the Philippines and a similar length of time along the Chinese coastline. Another bird is giving weak signals from further east and is possibly moving around. Another flew direct for 6,500 km at an average speed of 57 kph and then contact was lost somewhere to the east of Taiwan - hopefully because the transmitter fell off as they are designed to do in due course. Yet another flew to the Caroline Islands (7 degrees north), then returned to Moreton Bay via New Ireland and the south east Papua New Guinea coast over a period of a month, with a final direct flight of 1,800 km.

The results are variable and have been influenced by the cyclone and, perhaps, by differing responses by individuals to their transmitter and harness. The curlews have demonstrated the capacity for very long initial flights from Moreton Bay and what seems like remarkable ability to adjust their flight plans.

PETER DRISCOLL

Details and updates on this project can be viewed on an NTT web page at <http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/migrant/english/index.html>

Record Wren Flight

A Wren weighing just half an ounce has gone into the record books after flying at least 1,000 miles. The 4 inch long bird astonished experts by travelling from a remote ringing station in Russia to West Sussex, England. It is only the second wren ringed abroad to have been found in Britain.

What makes its journey even more remarkable is that most Wrens do not budge from the area where they were born. Their short wings are designed for darting through the undergrowth, not

trans-continental cruising. Jeremy Blackburn, of the British Trust for Ornithology, said "In Britain we get excited if we find a Wren has flown 25 miles".

The epic journey began on 18 September last year when the Wren was caught at Russia's Rybachy ringing station near Kaliningrad. It was trapped in nets among the birch woods on a 40 mile sand bar jutting out into the Baltic. In early March it was found in an old Wren's nest by birdwatcher Martin Love.

It's journey, almost certainly overland, would have been made in four or five 12 hour night flights, interspersed with two week stopovers to feed up. BTO expert Chris Mead said "Wrens migrate annually in central Europe, some reaching Spain. This one must have been blown off course. Its overland trek could add up to 1,500 miles".

NATIONAL EXPRESS 9 July 1997.

Otago Gull Notes

At Victory Beach on 12 October 1996, two Black-backed Gulls attacked a lone Red-billed Gull in the shallows. Both the Black-backs repeatedly pecked the Red-billed Gull on the head and neck, then dragged it by a wing. After three minutes, the Red-billed Gull withdrew with tattered pink head and a wing dragging on the sand.

On 8 December 1996 a Black-backed Gull attached and killed a downy chick on a Rock and Pillar Range tarn. The adult dived on the chick, pecked its neck and lifted it three times from the water. Meanwhile the parents tried to drive off the attackers.

On 29 April 1997 in central Dunedin I drove behind an open truck laden with fish guts. Five Red-billed Gulls and three Black-backed Gulls pursued the truck, constantly diving and gobbling fish guts on the back as the vehicle travelled at 30-40 kph. The gulls kept up with the truck for 1.8 km before leaving it.

KIM MORRISON

Southland Black-billed Gulls

Our own Black-billed Gull colony, which made the front page of the *Southland Times*, ended up a great success last season and provided plenty of entertainment for visitors. In brief, the birds were washed out of the Mararoa River bed on the first nesting attempt. As the river remained very high for a fortnight, a small flock took a shine to our ploughed paddock on a flat about a

kilometre from the river. It wasn't long before a colony of around 3,800 had built up. These birds sat and hatched successfully, the majority having two chicks. In January the chicks started flying.

Until this time the losses had been a handful around the fringes of the colony. However harriers found the young flyers an easy lunch, and within a couple of days of their being on the wing, half a dozen harriers began working the colony constantly. The racket and the defence attacks on incoming hawks had little effect. As half the colony was not flying, the hawks could not miss, diving into the mass of scrambling chicks, clutching one and ignoring the irate parents' attacks, and flying over to the nearby hill face to have lunch, leaving a small puff of white feathers as the only evidence. I counted 150 such puffs, which were clearly visible against the green grass. One hawk showed great skills like a falcon, diving in on the novice flyers and taking one on the wing each time.

As the colony was down the hill behind my house, it was possible to keep an eye on activities without much effort. The most memorable features were the Quelea-like mass movements of the thousands of chicks trying to evade a hawk by running or flying, the high spirals of the adults riding a thermal over the nesting site (like white paper over a rubbish dump) and the chasing white mass of chicks running and diving in behind the tractor and hoes as we came up close to the colony. They are welcome back this season.

BRUCE NEWLAND

More Albinos

On 15 February 1997, shortly after 10 pm, a Blue Penguin was seen ashore at the surf's edge on Castle Point Beach. The bird was unusual in that its head and shoulders had predominantly white plumage. There appeared to be the occasional darker feather which gave its head a streaky appearance. The body of the penguin had normal colouration.

On seeing us the penguin did not move. We continued to walk along the beach getting closer and still the penguin did not move. Fearing it might be injured I approached to within one metre; the penguin then turned and headed out to sea. This allowed excellent views of its plumage.

OSNZ readers may be interested to know of a complete albino Pheasant which was seen on 21 October 1984 at Blyth Estuary, UK. The Pheasant was watched whilst it worked its way across an open area of salt marsh, until it disappeared into a wood. The only part of the bird not seen was its feet, the rest of it being completely white, including the bill. The Pheasant was on its own.

MARTIN SNOWBALL



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Rarebits

Mimiwhangata Brown Teal - Brown Teal are the sixth rarest duck species in the world and number only 2,000. The largest population is on Great Barrier Island, where there are approximately 1,500 Brown Teal. The remaining 500 are found mostly in the coastal area between the Bay of Islands and Whanaaki. Mimiwhangata Coastal Park, 50 minutes north of Whangarei, is considered a stronghold of mainland Brown Teal (approx. 150) on the conservation estate. The number of Brown Teal on the mainland is declining, and if the current rate of decline continues, Brown Teal may become extinct on the mainland by next century.

Research by Murray Williams suggested that the most probable causes of teal decline are mammalian predators and habitat loss. As a result of these findings, a research by management programme was established at Mimiwhangata and has been running for the past twelve months. The objectives of the programme were to secure the population and to determine the causes of its decline.

In an attempt to determine the role of predators in the decline of teal at Mimiwhangata, an intensive and on-going predator control programme has been established. A full time trapper has been employed to service a 45 kilometre trap line. Fenn and Victor traps are being used to target feral cats and mustelids. The trapping line was set up in April and, so far, 32 cats and 26 mustelids have been caught. In addition to predator control, ponds and wetlands have been constructed to provide habitats where the teal can form summer flocks (necessary for bond formation) and breed in the winter.

James Fraser, with the help of his dog Fiddich, has been locating, catching, banding and fitting transmitters to Brown Teal in an attempt to discover the meaning of life for these secretive birds. Each week, birds carrying transmitters are located during the day, to find out where and with whom they are roosting. The birds are also tracked at night to discover where they feed. The number and location of nests, the number of offspring and the survival of ducklings has also been recorded.

The initial estimates of numbers of teal at Mimiwhangata was thought to be around 13 pairs. During the year 104 birds have been banded, including 27 pairs. In addition approximately 40 unbanded birds are known. Transmitters have been fitted to 27 birds.

Most birds appear to be loyal to one day time roost site, and are found almost exclusively at that spot throughout the

year. The exceptions to this are when females are nesting, and when birds leave their normal roost to congregate at summer flock sites. The usual day time roost sites are in thick cover and are usually near water. Old type swamps with kiekie and parataniwha with a slow flow of heavily mineralised water hold a relatively large number of birds. Indeed it is easy to think of this as the preferred habitat type before modification by drainage of these areas. Although most birds roost near water, this is not true for all. One pair roosts high on a ridge, 200 metres away from water among manuka and tanekaha.

Teal feed primarily by dabbling in areas of shallow water with mud and silt substrate. Cattle pugging these feeding sites in winter appear to improve conditions for teal, and this is one of a few circumstances where the presence of cattle benefits teal.

Many birds walk or swim long distances along waterways to feeding areas. During winter, many birds will forsake wetlands to feed on pasture, possibly because the water level is too deep for dabbling, or because slugs and worms are accessible on pasture at this time of year.

Fecundity has never been a problem with teal, and 1996 was no exception. Nesting began in April and continued throughout the year, although the peak was between July and August. Seventeen nests were located using the transmitters and Fiddich. Nests were found in a variety of locations and vegetation types. Some nests were found in the "normal" sites - near water and in *Carex*. However many sites led us to question what bird we were working on. One nest was found four metres up a puriri in a clump of *Astelia*; another was found 150 metres up a ridge, 250 metres away from water in a clump of Australian sedge. Australian sedge was very popular as nest sites, with seven being found in this highly established Northland weed.

In all there was evidence of 31 breeding attempts. Two nests were lost, two birds multiple-brooded and at least one entire brood was lost. As with most duck species there is a high level of mortality immediately after hatching; 44% of ducklings were lost in the first three weeks. The causes of these losses will be investigated next winter.

After six weeks of age and fledging, the loss of ducklings is small. 70 ducklings were fledged at Mimiwhangata this year. Where the juveniles disperse to between the time of eviction from natal territory (in September) to their appearance at flock sites (in November) was a question that we had hoped to answer this year. Unfortunately we are no further down the track on this one. Some ducklings stay with their parents in the natal territory, a small percentage stay in non flocking habitats (8.6%) and a large percentage (41.4%) assemble at

the flock sites after an absence of up to two months. However the largest proportion (50%) of juveniles are not accounted for by late summer. Are these ducklings at another flock site? Are they in non flocking areas? Or have they been preyed upon?

The number of birds at flocks sites has been used a barometer of the health of the Brown Teal population. Flock counts go back to 1988 and have generally shown the slow decline, and, in some areas, local extinction of teal. In 1996 the count at Mimiwhangata was 16, in 1997 the count was 51, an increase of 218%. This compares with an increase of 79% at nearby Teal Bay, where there is no management in place.

So that's the year according to Brown Teal research at Mimiwhangata. As with most research, more questions have been generated than have been answered. Most importantly, however, Brown Teal appear to have had a successful year at Mimiwhangata and have increased in number.

(James Fraser)

New Zealand Dotterel - a repeat of the 1989/90 national census was carried out in the past breeding season following recommendations by the New Zealand Dotterel Recovery Group. The census was carried out by DoC staff, Ornithological Society members and Conservation Corps based at Northland Polytech. A total of 791 birds was found in the post-breeding count. This showed an increase of 15-18% on the 1989/90 census. However, when various factors, such as better coverage in 1996/97, are taken into account the increase is nearer to 10%, an encouraging increase nonetheless. Not so encouraging is the fact that dotterel numbers decreased on the west coast. The reasons for this decrease are currently unknown.

(Richard Parrish, Michael Heads,
Ray Pierce)

The aim of this (East Coast/Hawkes Bay) project was to increase New Zealand Dotterel breeding success, chick survival and to protect important habitat

Three main sites were monitored in the Opotiki Field Centre area; Waiotahi Spit and beach, Waioka rivermouth and the Waioua Spit. These sites held a total of 22 birds (eleven pairs), two pairs at Waiotahi, four pairs at Waioka and five pairs at Waioua. A total of 21 chicks was hatched this season, eleven of which managed to fledge, with only three pairs unable to rear any chicks, even after their second attempt. Four of the seven successful pairs managed to rear two chicks each, the remaining three pairs only one chick.

No chicks were successfully reared at Waiotahi, while five chicks fledged at from Waioka and six chicks fledged at

Waioua. This is a record number of chicks fledged for the area despite the adult numbers being down on last year. Several banded birds were also seen at these sites during the course of the breeding season which did not establish territories. However a pair was reported to have established a territory at Whangaparaoa rivermouth, one of which had a band.

This year's success was achieved by the use of Talon 20p poison as a means of controlling key predators and, possibly, through secondary poisoning in combination with trapping. Regular monitoring of the New Zealand Dotterels showed the effectiveness of our predator control. There was also increased advocacy and public awareness through liaison, signage, newspaper articles, and through greater DoC presence at the breeding sites. We intend to duplicate this work in the coming season.

Mapara Kokako - Following agreement reached at the recent Kokako Recovery Group meeting, several Kokako from the Mapara "farm" will be transferred to three other sites: Pikiariki, the site of the famous Pureora tree-top protests in the 1970s now has only a few lonely males; the Hunuas where the two remaining pairs (and a few males) could do with a boost to kick-start recovery; and Tiritiri Matangi Island, where a couple of Mapara birds will team up with Kokako from Mt Bruce. Total recorded chick production from Mapara this season was a record 64 (plus it is likely that several chicks were produced but not recorded).

(Phil Thomson)

The 1996/97 breeding season (at Northern Te Urewera mainland island and Kokako Otamatuna) has been the most productive since monitoring began. Fourteen pairs were monitored for breeding and ten pairs nested. Eight of these were successful on the first attempt (usual loss of nests on first attempt is 70-80%). Of the two failures, one was due to a possum which left two half-eaten chicks in the nest. The other loss was unknown. Six pairs re-nested, all of which were successful. Five of these had already raised one brood and one was from a first attempt.

23 chicks were fledged, and nineteen of these were banded. Three had transmitters fitted to help provide information on dispersal. Overall 87% of the nests were successful, and 64% of pairs successfully fledged chicks.

Waikaremoana Kiwi project - Following on from February's *Rarebits*, the kiwi at Lake Waikaremoana have not fared as badly as one might have thought. We still have not caught many stoats, with only seventeen caught this year. However we currently have four chicks alive and kicking on the peninsula and two down at Westshore Wildlife Reserve, Napier, under the care of Tony Billing. The two captive chicks will be allowed to reach

700g. before being released - therefore a potential of six chicks for the season. Time will tell.

We are currently doing a major overhaul of all traps and trap covers, all receiving much-needed maintenance. Another point of interest is a potent new capture technique that we have discovered. A motorist stunned a kiwi on the Ruatahuna-Aniwaniwa road. This motorist had the foresight to grab said kiwi, take it home and inform Glenn Mitchell (Field Centre Manager, Aniwaniwa). Turns out said kiwi is a known bird, though never captured previously. It spent a couple of days at the vet's recuperating, before returning to its capture point, equipped with transmitter and as part of our team of control birds. Of course it was named "Diff".

Seabirds - Bryan Williams (New Plymouth Field Centre) recently led a team of three to Motumahanga Island (1.2 ha.), one of the predator-free islands in the Sugarloaf group off the Taranaki coast. Tagging along with Bryan were Lisa Sinclair (Head Office invertebrate specialist) and Alan Tennyson (Museum of New Zealand). The purpose of this overnight trip was to begin the first part of an inventory of invertebrates of this island group, and to reassess the petrel population active here at this time of the year.

Diving Petrels and Flesh-footed Shearwaters were the order of the night. The team estimated between 2,000 and 3,000 diving petrel burrows along with about 20 larger burrows, apparently all belonging to Flesh-footed Shearwaters. 18 Flesh-foot chicks and 20 diving petrels were banded. Other inhabitants of these islands at various times of the year include White-faced Storm Petrels, Fluttering and Sooty Shearwaters. This is the only known breeding colony of Sooties on the west coast of the North Island between Kapiti and the Three Kings in the north.

Kea - The unruly mob of twelve Kea that have been trained to harass food-bearing tourists on the Takaka Hill moved down to the Motueka and Moutere area for the fruit harvest season. To date they have amused themselves by destroying fruit, rearranging residential property and removing rubber bits off vehicles. To avoid the inevitable double-barrelled solution proposed by several affected landowners, five birds were relocated to well inside the Kahurangi National Park. The remaining birds are still causing problems with periodic dawn raids. This latter group has learnt to identify DoC vehicles and uniforms, making them impossible to approach in the standard conspicuous way. Undercover work is now required.

It's also the time of year for Kea to come down for a holiday on Fox Glacier town. Kea have been into their usual mischief in town; the general feeling around town by the locals has been one

of gritted teeth tolerance. A few innovative ideas to deter Kea have been to tie fishing gut to moss drying tunnels to stop Kea landing (and then chewing the plastic), holding birds in a cage and then releasing again, and transferring birds away from the area. New ideas to deter Kea would be welcome.

A publicity campaign has been running for almost a year to increase understanding within the community. Our aims are to get the community to take responsibility for Kea issues. Although the success of such campaigns are difficult to measure, we have had some success with some. For example we had one request for help from someone who said in the past they would have shot problem Kea.

Patagial tags will be placed on ten Kea this year to aid identification of mischievous birds. The tagging is still an experimental method, so only adults will be tagged in the hope that they are more sedentary and can therefore be monitored regularly. The method will be evaluated after one year.

Black Stilts - the past breeding season for Black Stilts has been the most successful in almost a decade. The management team based at Twizel Field Centre located eighteen breeding pairs, an increase of 64% on the eleven breeding pairs during the 1995/96 season. A further six pairs were located but not recorded as nesting. In total, then, 24 pairs were located and this represents a 60% increase from the fifteen productive and non-productive pairs of the previous year.

The increase in breeding pair numbers appears to be a result of intensive captive rearing and release of young birds into the wild. Fourteen captive reared birds have been recruited into the wild population since releases began in 1987, boosting the small population to 105 birds. Of the fourteen birds, ten are of breeding age, and nine of these nested this season. Seven of the nine birds formed pairs with other Black Stilts or very dark hybrids. Five of the pairs successfully reared chicks to fledging in the wild. Most are concentrated on the lower Ohau/Tekapo Rivers, supplementing the existing population node in that area. As the population grows the potential for unpaired birds to find another Black Stilt mate (rather than a Pied or hybrid) should increase, and hybridisation be minimised.

This season 59 eggs were artificially incubated, with a hatching success of 95.6% from fertile eggs. Although fledging success was a little disappointing (27% of eggs returned to the wild resulted in fledged chicks), this was a significant improvement from the 5% success achieved last season. This year's result is also exceptional in that it was achieved in the absence of predator management.

NPP and S&R funding was received to research the causes of egg and chick loss. Time lapse videos recorded nine

cat predations, which includes the predation of an adult bird.

A further seven chicks were fledged by pairs which were not located until after they had hatched their own eggs, giving a record total of fifteen chicks for the season (up from one, seven and two for the past three years respectively). And the good news doesn't stop with the production from wild pairs!

The captive population doubled from three to six pairs, producing 37 eggs (a 300% increase from twelve last year). 26 fledglings were produced in captivity, fifteen of which were hand reared, and the remaining eleven reared by captive pairs. This level of output is comparable with annual production in captivity in each of the last five years.

26 juveniles reared in the 1995/96 breeding season were released into the wild in September 1996, with another record-breaking result of almost 70% survival after three months (compared with approximately 45% in each of the past two releases).

In summary, a very encouraging season, with a marked increase in the number of breeding pairs, an improved survival of chicks in the wild, an improved survival of captive released birds in the wild breeding population, an increase in the number of captive breeding pairs, and the start of some meaningful research into the causes of nest failure.

(Dave Murray, Christine Reed)

Okarito Brown Kiwi - Of the three juvenile kiwi surviving at the time of the last issue, one is suspected to have died in a territorial dispute with a neighbouring adult. The remaining two are active and maintaining a steady weight. One has dispersed 2.5 km from the release site, and may have passed safely through other adult pairs' territories, while the other remains within one kilometre of the release site. They have now been in the wild for over five months.

Four more juveniles were released on 26 May, weighing between 1.25 and 1.5 kg. This is approximately 300g lighter than the previous six birds released. After a week one of these juveniles had dropped below 1 kg and was lethargic and didn't look well. It was returned to captivity where it is now recovering and putting on weight. Of the remaining three, two recorded weight gains in the first week but by the second week all three had lost weight. One was down from 1.58 to 1.075 kg but still seemed to be in reasonable condition and very active. At the end of the third week one of these juveniles was found to be in a very poor state with substantial bruising on its legs, so it was removed from the forest. Unfortunately it died before we could get it to Hokitika and veterinary treatment. We suspect that this bird may have inadvertently become entangled in the forest. We are awaiting the results of a necropsy to determine the cause of

death. Two other chicks will be released at the beginning of July.

We are exploring softer release options for transferring juveniles from captivity into the wild. One of these is an interim stage from captivity to a predator- and kiwi-free island. We have a proposal being considered at present to transfer Okarito Brown Kiwi juveniles to Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds.

Brown Teal - Recently staff in Te Anau received the results of genetic analyses of blood samples from Fiordland Brown Teal. For several years there have been sightings of Brown Teal in Fiordland. Last summer, thanks to NPP funds, staff and contractors eventually caught some teal, collected blood samples and attached radio-transmitters. The results from the genetic analyses have been a little discouraging.

Although Fiordland Brown Teal appear different from Great Barrier Island Brown Teal (according to the dog handlers who have worked on several teal populations), the results showed no significant differences. Prior to this, the team went back into the site to check on the radio-tagged bird and confirmed the worst fears - the teal had been predated.

This work confirms that there is a very small population of Brown Teal in Fiordland, and that, although they may look different from other Brown Teal populations, they are similar genetically. So, now it's up to the Brown Teal Recovery Group to recommend the priority of any further work to safeguard this population.

Weka - During possum surveys in western Fiordland, the teams carrying out work also kept a note of Weka sign and calls. In 60 person days of survey, only one Weka call was heard and none were seen. Fifteen years ago a similar survey (for possum sign) was carried out with abundant Weka recorded. Western Fiordland is assumed to be the stronghold for Weka, thus this report requires serious attention. Fiordland is thought of as a stronghold for Western Weka, Southern Tokoeka (kiwi), Blue Duck, Mohua, etc., etc. The reality is that we don't know what is there, and the few anecdotal reports received recently have been discouraging. All of the approved Recovery Plans for these (and other) species state the need for survey and longer term monitoring of the populations of these species. But just how do you survey *1.3 million hectares* of very steep country? Biodiversity in Fiordland is more than Takahe and sandflies, and the time is coming when it may be too late to make a difference.

Codfish Is. Fernbirds - the kiore eradication here is very much off and on again. In January we transferred 19 Codfish Island Fernbirds to Kaimohu Island (an 8 ha. muttonbird island,

southern Stewart Island). Pete McClelland went back six weeks later to check on progress, and guess what - no Fernbirds. Chief suspicion lies with habitat differences and the presence of Banded Rails (as a predator). Efforts will now concentrate on further Fernbird transfers to Putauhinu Island following kiore eradication this year in August.

The kiore eradication on Whenua Hou will take place if we can establish a healthy second population of these Fernbirds, and Kakapo don't attempt to breed next year.

Regional Roundup

Northland

In June the Whangarei/Kaipara/Far North wader census was carried out as usual. We were fortunate to have Carrie Rose, a veterinarian working for the NZ Wildlife Rehabilitation Trust in Auckland, talk to us at our July meeting about rehabilitating oiled seabirds, and the planned centre and mobile unit for the Auckland area.

11 July saw a group of people staying the weekend at Lonsdale Park. The swell at the islands was too high on Saturday, so everyone spent the day out and about in the North. On Sunday twenty volunteers were ferried to Motukawanui Island, where they planted over 1,000 trees. It is very satisfying to look at the areas which have been planted in previous years and to see how well all the trees are growing.

Beach patrols have continued as usual, with fairly low numbers of birds being recovered and no exciting rarities as yet.

The end of July saw the beginning of the 1997 passerine netting programme. There is still an abundance of Silvereyes, plus the odd Chaffinch and House Sparrow around to band. Even Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Greenfinches find their way into the nets.

9 and 10 August saw a group travel out to Tiritiri Matangi Island, and, while these enthusiasts were observing the abundant birdlife there, they were very fortunate to witness the release of three Kokako.

(Margaret Dowdell)

Lorna Simpkin indicated that there have been no rarities turn up on beach patrols this year.

Two rarities have come to my attention, but not from beaches. Both were alive when found and handed in to the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre but subsequently died, presumably from exhaustion. On 1 March

a White-tailed Tropicbird was found at Kara, and a White-capped Noddy (early April) landed on a small fishing boat off Kauri Mountain after circling the boat several times. As both birds were in good condition (in spite of being dead!), I sent them to the Museum of New Zealand in Wellington.

(Richard Parrish)

South Auckland

Our regular writer of this column, Paul Harrison, has returned to his native England. We wish him well and look forward to his urge to roost with us again.

Our main winter objective was to retain enough people to stay for winter censuses, as many get Paul's urge to move to warmer climes for short periods. Somehow we coped and stretched everyone's abilities as usual. Spreading the Kaipara and Manukau Harbour counts over two days (instead of the same day) seemed to work, and improved coverage of the Kaipara was achieved, though it would be nice to have a surplus of people to help maintain past Manukau efforts.

Over-wintering species of note from the Manukau were an Asiatic Whimbrel, 44 Turnstones, a Curlew Sandpiper, 8 Red-necked Stints and a Little Tern. The Greenshank and another Whimbrel which had been seen prior to census day managed to avoid detection on the day. SIPO turned out in force as usual, with another impressive tally of 24,759.

The most unusual sighting was seen by Tim Lovegrove on the Mainfreight building's flat roof, where among 600 SIPO were 220 Wrybills. The extremes some species will go to avoid being counted!

Wrybills were plentiful on the Firth of Thames at 2,790, up on the regular 2,500. A Red-necked Stint and a Far Eastern Curlew remained to entertain winter visitors to the coast, along with two Royal Spoonbills.

It was a delight to meet and have the assistance of overseas visitors Paul Rose (Canada) and Trevor Hardaker (South Africa), who, along with local Will Perry, were seen busy twitching during the day, bittern being the favoured subject.

Radio broadcaster Matthew Lark made our May meeting a memorable one, explaining how he works: collecting information, then going out into the field to be hands-on. He shared some fascinating experiences with us, and along with other subject matters, gave us much to think about for the future.

David Lawrie in June gave an account of his visit with Lynne to England, Wales and Hong Kong. He was lucky enough to manage some mist netting at the Mai Po Marshes in Hong Kong, and showed us some lovely slides of memorable places in England and Wales.

Trevor Hardaker rewarded us with an extensive tour of South Africa in July. The phrase "hazardous to your health" was used often - not smoking, drinking and other such habits, but, enunciated in nice, broad South African English this meant unseen hippos, the odd rhino, and don't get in the way of the elephants. Trevor is on the South African Rare Birds Committee, so was well aware of the dilemma we were leaving us with, with his records of strange birds in strange places.

An extensive coverage of the vast array of birds which John and Stella Rowe saw while on a three month tour of Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Botswana was the August meeting subject. Local knowledge from local guides meant many species were able to be tracked down, while avoiding those species 'hazardous to your health'.

Other visitors to the region have been a Black-fronted Dotterel at Miranda, 63 Cattle Egrets at Aka Aka and 53 at Piako. Beach patrolling has been quiet, apart from a small wreck of diving petrels.

(Tony Habraken)

Waikato

Mild, calm weather has allowed a couple of unscheduled trips to Kawhia Harbour to search for colour banded birds. The Royal Spoonbill flock has increased to around 45 birds, which feed mainly in the upper reaches of the harbour. They roost in a tight little flock on one of the two small groups of rocks situated on either side of the harbour and are very sensitive to disturbance. To avoid the inevitable flight from one roost to the other, we approached them from land and sea, but they still outwitted us by dividing into two groups, one of which flew off down the harbour.

A second count was made on census day when the weather was not so kind, and four banded birds were noted in a flock of 40 birds. Two birds were from Green Island Nature Reserve and two from the Wairau Lagoons. Black Stilts and hybrids were also sought with mixed results on census day, but were followed out across the mudflats later on a glorious fine afternoon, when nine Black and hybrid/Blacks were located. Along with a solitary (Asiatic?) Whimbrel were two SIPO which had been colour banded in Canterbury among the usual wintering flock of waders.

A heron, believed to be an Intermediate Egret, was seen on Raglan Harbour on census day, but could not be found when searched for a few days later.

Five minute birds counts were started on Mt Kakepuku, to assess the impact of predator control there. Most goats have

been shot, and bait stations have been established for possums and rats. Tomtits were heard singing, Tui, NZ Pigeons, Silvereyes and Grey Warblers were seen.

Several members also visited the aviaries of Full Flight Conservation Trusts at Te Pahu, which have been established for the recuperation and repatriation into the wild of injured native birds.

Evening meeting topics enjoyed were the Birds of Africa talk by John Rowe, and Adrian Riegen's excellent explanation of the significance of moult in waders. Dried examples of wings in moult, brought along by Clinton Care, aided the explanations.

(Bev Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

In April, Gladys and I joined an OSNZ party, visiting a superb wetland at Reporoa, owned by a Mr Johnston, a member of Ducks Unlimited NZ. We viewed at close range his collection of some rare ducks, including a Carolina Wood Duck and an attractive Chestnut Teal from Australia. He had some 50 odd Grey Teal, all free-flying, which breed in special nest boxes he has made and placed on posts. He had a pair of Australian Chestnut-breasted Shelducks and five Mute Swans which are scarce in New Zealand. He is trying to breed from them, so far without success.

Last year he bred three ducklings from the rare Blue Duck which inhabit fast-flowing streams and are now an endangered species. He is the first person to have bred them in New Zealand, although Sir Peter Scott bred them some years ago at Slimbridge in the UK.

(Roy Weston)

The Opotiki area field trip with Bill Sloan in May was the most popular this year, with 17 members attending. Great distances were travelled by some; Patrick Buxton came from Taupo, Morley Weston and his wife came from Rotorua, the Ormonds from south Auckland and several from around Tauranga.

We left from Bill and Rachel Sloan's place after enjoying Rachel's morning tea and hospitality, and travelled inland towards the upper Motu region. We searched and searched for the elusive Blue Ducks and Weka, but, alas, in vain.

The area was particularly beautiful, and the rain stayed away until late afternoon. So we all had plenty of opportunity to catch up with the latest news and thoroughly enjoyed the company of so many members together, some of whom we hadn't seen for quite a while.

Two Terek Sandpipers in the sand dunes at the entrance to Ohiwa Harbour were seen by several people for a three week period in late January-early February - first seen by Bill Sloan and

identified and confirmed by Malcolm Hutton. These birds were generally seen with Banded and New Zealand Dotterels. Sometimes a Mongolian Dotterel was present, and two Wrybills were also close by.

A frigatebird was seen by the Turner family on Great Mercury Island in January. Four Black-fronted Dotterels were seen on the Kaituna Lagoons during the winter bird count in June. This is good news, since for many years this wetland has been unsuitable for most waders.

32 Cattle Egrets were also seen during the wader count in the Kaituna-Maketu area, and 12 have been seen on Greig Road, Matata.

(John Brierley)

Taranaki

On the May trip to an inland, unmodified swamp area, 25 bird species were recorded, including NZ Pipits and the usual Fernbirds answering taped calls. A lone NZ Falcon was seen on the day, but we have had reports of sightings which would indicate that they are seen over a wide area. A flock of 30+ Whiteheads were recorded in the Kaiawa River area of Egmont National Park. A Waitara farmer has observed Cattle Egrets on his farmland, 20 on 11 May, and at this time, 8 August, five remain. In the autumn 12+ Eastern Rosellas have been seen in the coastal town of Okato. Early in the year a local Fish and Game officer reported seeing 1600+ moulting Paradise Shelducks on a lake in the Oponake area.

Our RR David Medway reported on the AGM at our June meeting. The monthly field trip was to the Tawhare reserve at Mokau, and it was noted that a spoonbill is still in the vicinity of the Waitara River mouth. Sightings of a single Kaka have been reported at Lucy's Gully, Stoney River, Barrett Road, and last month a lone bird was in an Oponake garden for a few days.

There have been further interesting sightings along the coast, including a Black-fronted and a Crested Tern. Up to 20 Pied Stilts are regularly seen at the Waiongana River mouth and, over a period of three months, a large number, up to 50+, Banded Dotterels are regularly in this locality. It is interesting to note that the only nesting site located in the last few years was in the newly developed Bell Block railway yards where shingle was spread around. This site was abandoned. A breeding site for the present flock has not yet been located.

However a new breeding site for Grey-faced Petrels has been confirmed on Motu-o-Tamatea Island, where the burrow numbers have been increasing for a number of years. In 1989 there were no known burrows. It may be that the birds have left mainland colonies at Beach and Surrey Roads. One theory for the increased activity on the island is the change in vegetation cover from grass

and tussock to a healthy spreading karo and taupata forest. At the August meeting members discussed the Banded Dotterels and Grey-faced Petrels.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Hawkes Bay

In May we visited Mohi Bush, where pigeons, Tui, Riflemen, Fantails and Silvereyes were seen. The pigeonwoods were covered with masses of green berries. In mid July we visited Waitangi and Tukituki estuaries. Five Black-fronted Terns were roosting with Black-billed and Red-billed Gulls at Waitangi. At Tukituki a White Heron and a Little Egret were feeding in a drain in a paddock.

At the beginning of August we held a meeting at the Education Discovery Centre in Napier. Items for discussion included a report on the AGM, SIPO banding project, and the gull and tern survey. With there being no one willing to take over the job of regional representative, a committee was formed and the various aspects of the job will be shared out.

Recent sightings of interest include ten Cattle Egrets at Ferry Road, Clive, and two at Takapau. Falcons have been seen in various places - one on Napier Hill and one in the vicinity of Bridge Pa and Fernhill in recent weeks. Up to 40 Black-fronted Terns were seen at Waitangi in July. 30 Royal Spoonbills were counted at the Ahuriri estuary in the June census. 57 Wrybills were at the Porangahau Estuary. A Whimbrel was seen feeding with godwits on the Porangahau River Estuary during the June census.

(Christine McRae)

Otago

After a marvellous July, the weather has really packed up. Weather permitting, however, we will continue with Silvereye and NZ Robin banding. At present Flagstaff is being checked for robin numbers. We have been informed that within twelve months the Douglas fir stand of the City Forest will be chopped down. Hence the urgency to check and band the population to enable us to try and find out where these birds will go.

The June winter wader count went without a hitch - you get that with fine, calm weather. We have carried out these counts for 15 years and have a very good picture of the importance of the areas for waders.

Another Australian Little Grebe has been seen at Anderson's Lagoon, Palmerston on 24 June. A Rook was reported flying south to north over Waianakarua mouth on 18 May. The same day there was a White Heron here and at Kakanui mouth. We are still piecing together local movements of banded Variable Oystercatchers.

(Peter Schweigman)

Chatham Islands

The wet weather has given way to an early spring, the first signs of which are numerous Buff Weka chicks which are now racing around the place. Only one Cattle Egret wintered over on the Chathams - it ranged widely across the island to feed, but left earlier than the birds did the previous summer.

With a constant eye out for White-fronted Terns throughout the winter, it is clear that all but a very few birds leave the island. The most seen at any one time was 21 at Ocean Mail in mid July. There were none of the big flocks you get in the summer. There has been one sighting of a Chathams yellow flagged tern; Phil Battley recorded a bird in southern Queensland. It is good to see such an exciting result at this early stage.

The beaches are still casting up plenty of interesting birds, including, in the last few months, Grey Petrel, White-headed Petrel and good numbers of young Buller's Mollymawks which were fledging from the Sisters and Forty Fours.

A census of Black Shag colonies is under way; so far five colonies have been found around the lakes or major rivers on the Main Island. Most of the northern part of the island has been covered. The last full census was conducted in 1961, and the distribution of shag colonies has changed considerably since then. Three colonies have disappeared and two new colonies have started up. The main reason for the loss of the colonies appears to be cattle killing flax (which the shags nest in) around the lake shore. It is hoped that by the end of summer a census of Pitt and Chatham Island Shag colonies will be completed also.

(Mike Bell)

What's On



Northland/Far North

25 October - square kilometre land survey. Ph. Tony Beauchamp (09) 436 2661.
13 November - evening meeting. Advisory Services, Alexander Street, Whangarei. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.
15 November - Whangarei Harbour census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988, David Crockett (09) 435 0954.
16 November - Kaipara Harbour census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988, David Crockett (09) 435 0954.
22-23 November - Rangaunu and Far North wader census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.
6 December - Bird race, with shared meal at Jean Hawkin's. Ph. Jean (09) 438 1985.

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

Evening meetings - first Tuesday of each month (except January) at the Auckland Museum (entry via west door) at 7.45 pm.

Muriwai Beach patrol - Sundays following meeting. Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5517.
28 September - tree planting on Motuora Island. Ph. Chris Bindon (09) 836 6183.
16 November - Kaipara Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.



South Auckland

14 October - evening meeting, Papakura Croquet clubrooms, Chapel Street, Papakura. Tuamotu Sandpipers. Ph. David Lawrie, (09) 238 8407.
2 November - Firth of Thames census. Ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284.
11 November - evening meeting.
15 November - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284.
9 December - end of year barbecue, at home of John Brown, 37 Evanda Crescent, Conifer Grove, starts 6.30 pm.



Waikato

17 September - evening meeting, DoC conference room, London Street, Hamilton. Birds of Kruger Park. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
15 October - evening meeting. Birds of Iceland. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
18-19 October - Port Waikato overnight. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891.
15 November - Kawhia/Aotea/Raglan Harbours census. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
19 November - evening meeting. Coromandel kiwi. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
6 December - mystery bus trip. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
10 December - Christmas pot luck dinner. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.
Mt Karioi 5 min. bird counts and monthly beach patrols of west coast beaches. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891

Hamilton Lake counts - second Sunday of the month. Ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729 or Brian Challinor (07) 855 2561.

Bay of Plenty

19 October - Lake Tamarenuui reserve. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.
November - White Island field trip and summer wader census. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.
7 December - Kokako in Rotoehu Forest. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Taranaki

Manawatu

Wanganui

Hawkes Bay

28 September - 'Corrakane' Kereru Road. Ph. Christine McRae.

Wairarapa

Wellington

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

29 September - evening meeting, Black Stilts. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

West Coast

Otago

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

11 October - Yellow-eyed Penguin count. Ph. John Darby (03) 476 1676.
9 November - summer wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.
13 December - Yellow-eyed Penguin count. Ph. John Darby (03) 476 1676.

Southland

Evening meetings, Southland Museum, second Wednesday of even months. Ph. Lloyd Esler (03) 217 9060.
Beach patrols - each weekend during winter. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE IS 10 NOVEMBER