

No.91

June 1999

Note: Deadline for the September issue will be 10th August.

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

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

OSNZ News

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Flightless Duck Back from the Brink

Night time, Sealers Bay, Codfish Island. A cool, gentle breeze, rustling sand sedge on the dune, ripples the dark surface of a freshwater stream that meanders across the beach to the tideline. I crouch low by the rocks near a pile of bull kelp deposited by the surf. I fold up the aerial, unplug the lead from the receiver and still I am picking up a signal emitted at 40 pulses per minute.

The radio transmitter, bearing the frequency I am tuned into, must be within ten metres of me now. And shortly, out of the darkness, a small black shape appears to be moving across the grey sand towards the edge of the sea. It pauses, silent and motionless. A wave breaks, washing foam up the beach. The subject cautiously retreats back towards the rocks, disappearing into the shadows.

Ten or so minutes pass; a swift sweep of red torchlight over the scene and I find he's been there all along. And he's not alone. It's an adult Campbell Island Teal, and he's been exploiting his new coastal surroundings in the company of a young female.

Reflective coloured leg bands give me this information at a glance, although the slightly smaller size is also an indication of her gender. Even if the light had been bright enough to make out any plumage details, both birds would appear very similar in colour and markings at this time of year. It will take several weeks for the male to moult into his nuptial dress. And then if one did happen to catch a glimpse of the bird in the light of day, maybe skulking in low scrub cover, or roosting on a mossy boulder in a dark, peaty stream, his colouring would warrant closer inspection. A blue-green iridescence covering the head, a rich chestnut-brown breast, and finely vermiculated flank feathering leading to a white patch at the base of the tail, distinguish an adult male from females and juveniles.

I quickly turn off the torch and listen.

On cue, the male emits a short hiss-like trill. Then silence again. Another flash of torchlight reveals an empty patch of sand. All that remain are the faint outlines of their clawed and webbed feet - they are unusually large for such a small, non-diving duck.

On reflection the pair was obviously not troubled by my presence, but then that may be expected from these particular individuals. They are captive-bred birds that have just been released into the wild for the very first time. They are part of a group of 12 birds set free to found a new "wild" population of Campbell Island Teal, an insurance policy in addition to the 33 birds currently held in captivity, should the only existing wild population of possibly fewer than 20 birds on Dent Island (its last stronghold in the subantarctic) completely fold. The recovery of the critically endangered Campbell Island Teal is heavily dependant on its captive breeding programme at the Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre. It is unlikely that the wild population on Dent Island will ever be drawn from again - it's simply too fragile. The Codfish birds and their future offspring will have the opportunity to develop relevant survival skills in an environment of natural hazards and hardships, skills that will be essential for future life in the rugged and inhospitable subantarctic.

The long term goal for this species is to return it to its former range, main Campbell Island. However the ecological restoration of 11,268 hectare Campbell Island requires the complete eradication of all remaining mammalian predators. The last of the grazers were removed earlier this decade and cats have apparently died out. That just leaves those rogue Norway rats. The Department of Conservation believes it has the technology, but it may take time to get the financial backing for such an enormous eradication project.

Codfish Island, a wildlife sanctuary for which access is by permit only, is located just off the west coast of Stewart Island at the very base of New Zealand's mainland, some 660 km north of the Campbell Island group. Apart from possessing a cool climate, the island is free of mammalian predators and is regularly accessed by DoC staff. Most importantly it contains good teal habitat. It makes an ideal holding island for our captive-bred birds in the meantime.

OSNZ News - new name

The recommendation of the recent publications review, adopted by Council, to make *OSNZ News* a stand-alone publication rather than a supplement to *Notornis* was followed by a request for suggestions for a new name. Only four suggestions were received and these were considered by the joint Council/RRs' meeting at the recent AGM and conference in Christchurch.

As no consensus was reached, the deadline for the competition (for which the President is still offering an attractive prize) has been extended. It was, however, generally agreed that the Society's new magazine's name should contain the word 'bird' in some form or other!

Members are urged to don their thinking caps, and to forward further suggestions for a new name to me by 31 August.

TONY CROCKER
Editor *OSNZ News*

The teal require primarily freshwater habitat, but also access to coastal margins where they may forage amongst seaweed, particularly at night. This is when sandhopper numbers seem to be at their most prolific. Scientists are also of the opinion that the teal associate with burrowing seabird colonies where invertebrates are attracted to the vast quantities of faeces produced at such sites. Dent Island is perforated with burrows of White-chinned Petrels, also isolated from main Campbell Island. Further north, Codfish Island's burrowing nesters include Sooty Shearwaters, Mottled and Cook's Petrels and South Georgian Diving Petrels, as well as Blue Penguins. It remains to be seen whether the captive-bred teal will find the colonies and tap into this potential food source.

FAREWELL SPIT Training Course

Council has approved the concept of a seven day field study and training course to be held at Farewell Spit in late January 2000. The course will hopefully be based at the lighthouse where accommodation, and hence the number of participants, is limited. Priority will be given to junior members and others who are in a position to best use their training to benefit the work of the Society.

The Spit is a harsh environment - expect to be blasted by sand and burned by the sun, but you will also savour one of New Zealand's premier bird habitats, where your endeavours with thousands of waders in this wilderness will remain with you for life.

At this early stage of planning it is envisaged that the course will provide training in: wader identification, census techniques, use of mist nets, banding and recording of moult on passerines, bird photography and the accurate keeping of records leading to scientific publications.

Farewell Spit is a nature reserve and entry is by permit only. If a permit is obtained for this course, the party will be expected to complete some meaningful research in which all participants will be expected to contribute to the data collection, analysis and presentation.

Expressions of interest from potential "students" and "tutors" should be made to your Regional Representative and forwarded to Peter Gaze, 48 Brooklands Road, Nelson, by 31 July 1999.

PETER GAZE
pgaze@doc.govt.nz

Damp, sandy kelp loaded with the much-relished sandhoppers was certainly sieved through by the Campbell Island Teal in their pre-release holding aviaries on the island. A period of one to two weeks of captive confinement allowed for familiarisation with new surroundings and food sources, and a chance to regain weight lost during the transfer, before the hard release. Now, roaming the rugged landscape, they will almost certainly become opportunistic feeders, taking plant material in the form of seeds or waterweeds as well as aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates.

Monitoring will be carried out during the year following the release in order to assess survivorship of different age classes, to determine the range of dispersal, and to record habitat use. Birds have already climbed steep rock faces, found refuge beneath large piles of salt sprayed driftwood, entered neglected seabird burrows and, most impressively, ventured out on the sea. They are sure to have encountered their first Yellow-eyed Penguins as well as a New Zealand Sea-lion attending her pup at Sealers Bay.

Radio transmitters should also lead field staff to any nests, although that is perhaps prematurely optimistic; it will probably take several planned releases to establish a self-sustaining population on Codfish. But optimism is the fuel of any conservation programme. It certainly has to be for this one.

HELEN GUMMER

CSN - a reminder

The deadline for material to be in the hands of the island collators is 31 August. Anything received later will be held over until next year.

In the first instance, members should send their material to the appropriate Regional Recorder, who is responsible for collating the region's contribution. In order to have time to complete this task, Regional Recorders need to receive members' contributions by 31 July.

The CSN year runs from 1 July to 30 June, so now is the time to extract all those observations from your notebooks. To assist with the process, below is a list of the Regional Recorders to whom the appropriate observations should be sent.

Far North: Laurie Howell, 38 Okahu Road, Kaitaia. Ph. (09) 408 2084.

Northland: Pauline Smith, 11/31 Ford Ave, Kamo, Whangarei. Ph. (09) 435 3060.

Auckland: Mel Galbreath, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland, Ph. (09) 480 1958.

South Auckland: Stuart Chambers, Clarks Beach Road, RD4, Pukekohe. Ph (09) 232 0188.

Waikato: David Riddell, 122 Woodlands Road, Gordonton, R.D.1 Hamilton. Ph. (07) 824 3043.

Bay of Plenty: Paddy Latham, 72 Simpson Road, Papamoa, Ph. (07) 542 0406.

Gisborne/Wairoa: Geoff Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa, Ph. (06) 838 8370.

Taranaki: Rosemary Messenger, Upland Road, No2RD, New Plymouth, Ph. (06) 756 7496.

Manawatu: Ian Saville, 23 Duke Street, Feilding. Ph/fax (06) 323 1441.

Wanganui: Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson Street, Aramoho, Wanganui, Ph. (06) 343 9992.

Hawkes Bay: Margaret Twydell, 124 Nelson Crescent, Napier, Ph. (06) 835 6563.

Wairarapa: Colin Scadden, 15 Madden Place, Masterton. Ph. (06) 378 6423.

Wellington: Reg Cotter, 1 Bolton Street, Petone. Ph. (04) 568 6960. Fax (04) 568 6956.

Nelson: Gail Quayle, 6 Tressillian Ave, Nelson, Ph. (03) 545 0456.

Marlborough: Bill Cash, 67 Lakings Road, Blenheim, Ph. (03) 578 6594.

West Coast: Bruce Stuart-Menteith, P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki, Ph. (03) 731 1826.

Canterbury: Jill West, 59 Strickland Street, Spreydon, Christchurch, Ph. (03) 337 1151.

Otago: Alun Baines, 41 Marion Street, MacAndrew Bay, Dunedin, Ph. (03) 476 1022.

Southland: Lloyd Esler, 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill, Ph/fax. (03) 213 0404.

J.S. Watson Conservation Trust

This trust is administered by Forest and Bird. Applications are invited from individuals or conservation groups for financial assistance for conservation projects over the 1999-2000 year. Criteria for assistance are:

- the conservation of plants and animals and natural features of New Zealand.

- the advancement of knowledge in these matters by way of research, literary contribution, essay or articles, or other effort.

- general education of the public to give them an understanding and love of the world in which they live.

A total of \$20,000 is available for distribution. Individual applications should be limited to a maximum of \$4,000. For further details and application forms write to:

Forest and Bird
PO Box 631
Wellington

Applications close 30 July 1999.

Alone in the Dark with a Silent Hunter

On my list of charismatic species, Moreporks are near the top. While I may have a slight bias, it's hard to understand why there aren't more studies of this magnificent bird.

True, they present their share of challenges. Firstly they are nocturnal, so unless you possess the ability to see beyond your nose in pitch black and are able to stay awake far into the night, then this species isn't for you (at night it always seems much colder and wetter and further back to camp than it actually is). Secondly, Moreporks fly silently and are extremely difficult to locate, be it by day or night. And thirdly they either inhabit tall forest, and of course are usually in the tops of trees, or else live in or near very thick scrubby forest. Neither of these forest types are conducive to identification and following of study birds.

However, despite these difficulties, I decided to study Moreporks on Mokoia Island, Lake Rotorua, as part of my Masters of Science (in ecology) at Massey University. Mokoia Island was the site of a planned brodifacoum poison drop during the winter of 1996. The main question was what happens to Moreporks following a poison drop to eradicate mice?

Because so little was known about the basic life history of Moreporks, my secondary goal was to patch as much of the gap as I could. I enlisted the help of Drs Edward Minot and Doug Armstrong from the recently renamed Ecology Group at Massey University. Without their help this study would not have been possible. Paul Jansen, then at the Department of Conservation, Bay of Plenty, along with many other staff at the Bay of Plenty office, were crucial to the success of this project, as were many volunteers and helpers. Thanks must also go to the OSNZ for their funding generously given through the Projects Assistance Fund.

Field work started in early November 1995, and ran through to March 1997, with a particularly intensive period during the first four months. We decided that the only way to study this species was to attach radio transmitters, but first we had to catch them. Mist nets were strung up along tracks and across gullies. We seemed to strike beginner's luck, as the first birds were not too difficult to catch. Later, however, our catching success was very variable.

Sometimes we might catch a bird within a few minutes, and at other times we sat for hours in the freezing cold for no reward. During the entire study we captured 31 Moreporks, and transmitters were fitted to 21 of those birds. Both adults and juveniles were radio-tagged successfully. With radio



Morepork on Mokoia Island

Photo: Brent Stephenson

receivers we could follow the birds' movements at night and locate their roosts by day.

All the information I could locate about this species suggests that female Moreporks are larger than males. However I could find no confirmation of this in the New Zealand literature, and once I had seen a few in the wild I doubted whether it was possible to tell the sexes apart. So, at the time of capture, we measured the birds, noted their plumage and took a small blood sample. In most cases the measurements and plumage characteristics were insufficient to determine the sex of the bird. There was a large degree of overlap between females (who were on average slightly larger) and males. However, using the blood sample collected and a PCR based DNA technique, we were able to resolve the sex of each bird captured. This is an interesting difference between the Australian Morepork (called Boobook by the Aussies) and the New Zealand version, as both are considered to be the same species. It appears that in Australia there is only a small amount of overlap in size, and males and females can be distinguished by morphology. In general Australian birds are larger than those in New Zealand.

Secondary poisoning has received relatively little investigation, either in New Zealand or the rest of the world. The growing use of second generation anticoagulant poisons in New Zealand conservation means that more information is needed. At the time of the poison drop in September 1996 we had 17 radio-ragged Moreporks on Mokoia. These birds were monitored following the poison operation.

The transmitter batteries failed for three birds before adequate data could be collected (some birds had been fitted with the transmitters since November/December 1995). 14 birds were followed successfully, and of these one died due to secondary poisoning, and a further two birds died, probably also as a result of secondary poisoning. This gives a mortality rate of 21% due to the poison drop.

What's more, during the breeding season following the poison drop it was found that breeding success was very low, with only one chick fledging from eight breeding pairs that were followed during that season (compared with nine chicks from nine pairs the previous season). This may have been due to sublethal doses of poison causing physiological changes in the breeding birds, or due to the almost

complete removal of mice and thus a drop in food resources (unfortunately the poison drop was not successful, and mice have now returned to pre-poisoning levels). Conversely, the poor breeding season may just have been a naturally bad year for the birds. More information is needed to really understand the patterns of breeding in Moreporks, and a long term study needs to be initiated into the effects of poison drops on Moreporks and other susceptible species.

The study confirmed that Moreporks are primarily nocturnal but that they do occasionally hunt by day. Most Moreporks located during the day were roosting in the foliage of a tree, most often among tree fern fronds which provide very good camouflage against the Morepork's mottled plumage. They were found to be strictly territorial, with pairs defending areas of between 5.4 - 7.9 ha. This is quite a small area, but is comparable with estimates of home ranges for this species in Australia, and for the similar Christmas Island Hawk-owl *Ninox natalis*.

Moreporks were found to breed from September through to January, and nests were located in a variety of locations. Most nests were in cavities, either in trees, amongst fern fronds in tree forks, on Saddleback nest boxes or in the ground. Two nests, however, were found on the ground among tree fern fronds and one of these nests was quite open. Of nine nests for which the total clutch size was known, four nests had one egg, four had two eggs and one nest had three.

We collected pellets from beneath roosts, made direct observations of hunting and examined nest contents. From all this we determined that the Moreporks on Mokoia are primarily insectivorous, but do prey on mice and birds. Mice appeared to be especially important in Morepork diet during June to September, possibly when insects were less common. From a camera set up at one nest it could be seen that most prey items brought to the nest were insects. However most prey items found in nests were either birds or mice, with one weta also being found. Despite many hours of observation, the actual capture of a mouse or bird was never witnessed, although Moreporks were seen with freshly killed mice on several occasions.

So, it can be seen that during the study we managed to learn quite a bit about this elusive species. We had a lot of fun during this project, and I would again like to thank the OSNZ and all those people who contributed to its success. If you would like more information about the study, please feel free to contact me.

BRENT STEPHENSON

Beach Patrol Scheme - 1998 preliminary report

This report concerns the results from 484 cards sent to the beach patrol convenor up until 1 April 1999. In 1998 3,108 km were patrolled by OSNZ members and friends. This distance is under the average of 4,007 km per year travelled during the period 1970-1994. Only six coastal sections had more than 100 km of beaches patrolled in 1997. These were Northland West (949 km), Northland East (543 km), Auckland West (507 km), Wellington West (201 km), Auckland East (168 km) and East Coast North Island (101 km). No cards were submitted from West Coast or Fiordland coastal sections and only one km was checked on Canterbury South beaches.

Dead seabirds found in 1998 totalled 12,535. This is a higher total than the average of 9,382 dead seabirds found per year in 1970-1994 and is the first time since 1986 that above average numbers of seabirds have been picked up by beach patrollers. Of the coastal sections where greater than 50 km were covered in 1998, Northland West had the highest rate of recovery at 6.39 birds per km of coast travelled (diving petrels and Blue Penguins were the main contributors to this rate). This was closely followed by Northland East beaches with 5.75 birds per km. Bay of Plenty members missed out on the largest haul of birds. Only 13 km of beaches were patrolled in 1998, but 187 birds were recorded at a rate of 14.38 birds per km. Judging by local DoC office reports, there were lots of birds washed up on these beaches. The lowest rate of recovery was on Outlying Islands beaches (Chatham Islands), with only 0.24 birds per km.

There were a number of unusual finds in 1998. In January the first specimen of a Bulwer's Petrel in New Zealand was found on a Wellington west beach. A Leach's Storm Petrel was picked up on Ninety-Mile Beach in October (seventh record for New Zealand). Other rarities included a New Caledonian Petrel on an Auckland East beach in November, a Wedge-tailed Shearwater on a Northland East beach in July and a White Tern on a Northland West beach in July.

Several species had larger wrecks than normal. Diving petrels wrecked in huge numbers, especially on northern beaches in July and August. There were 4,222 birds washed ashore, with almost 1,000 reported on one patrol of Ninety-Mile Beach in July. This is the largest number recorded in any year since the start of the beach patrol scheme. Fluttering Shearwaters wrecked in large numbers on Northland beaches in August and September. The 2,059 birds were the second highest annual total (only exceeded by the 2,391 birds recorded in 1985). The 1985 total may have been overtaken if Bay of Plenty

beaches had been regularly patrolled, as 104 birds washed ashore on only 13 km of beaches that were patrolled. Blue Penguins also suffered significant mortality on northern beaches. Only 1974 and 1985 had higher totals of Blue Penguins.

The weather in 1998 was characterised by strong easterly winds in the north during winter and spring. A strong La Nina event developed in the Pacific Ocean in the middle of the year. This brought warmer than average temperatures in winter and record heavy rainfalls in the north in July. Sea temperatures were much warmer than usual in northern New Zealand. In southern New Zealand, seas were also warmer than usual and low rainfall levels were experienced. The warm easterly winds may have contributed to tropical species washing ashore on northern beaches.

GRAEME TAYLOR
Convenor

Banded Golden Plovers

Pacific Golden Plovers are being colour banded on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific (in addition to American Golden Plovers and Grey Plovers for many years in Hawaii and Alaska), and it is possible that some of these birds may turn up in Australasia next austral spring and summer.

Each bird wears a metal band plus some combination of colour bands (a few have flags). It is important to record the exact sequence on each leg. Send observations to Oscar Johnson, Department of Biology, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717, USA <owjplovers@montana.campscw.net> or Phillip Brunner <brunnerp@BYUH.edu>.

HUGO PHILLIPS

Slide Library Update

The library thanks the people listed below who have recently donated slides:

George Chance, G. Searle, Pam Agnew, Brian Chudleigh, B. Harcourt (*Southland Times* via Lloyd Esler).

Catalogues are with Regional Representatives, but if you are giving a talk to anyone just send a list - we have most common species. The cost is \$5.00. Thanks to the regions who are continuing to use the service - Wairarapa, Auckland, Volcanic Plateau, Canterbury, Waikato. I look forward to your custom soon!

Please note the new address of the slide library - 67 School Road, Whatawhata, RD9 Hamilton.

PAUL CUMING
Slide Librarian

Report of Banding Liaison Officer

The banding scheme has been running smoothly throughout the year. No significant problems or concerns have been brought to my notice by members, and there have been only a few enquiries, all of which were easily dealt with. It seems banders are generally happy with the service they are receiving from the Banding Office, for which we should thank the staff Rod Cossee and Dawn Tofield.

During the year I received from the Banding Officer nine applications for comment and recommendation. Of these the following eight were granted:

- Rachel Keedwell - to band Banded Dotterels and Black-fronted Terns in the Mackenzie Basin as part of a PhD study of the causes of mortality of riverbed birds.

- John Innes - to band NZ Pigeons in Northland as part of an ongoing, cooperative research project to re-establish pigeons in a forested area.

- Claire Washington - to band Pukeko in north Canterbury as part of a M.Appl.Sc. study of aspects of their behaviour and management.

- James Briskie - to band Silvereyes near Kaikoura as part of a study of their singing behaviour (with Craig Barnett, MSc student).

- Jim Wilson and Phil Garside - to band Bellbirds and Tui in Dunedin as part of their study of their movements and general behaviour.

- Brent Stephenson - to band Australasian Gannets at Cape Kidnappers as part of a PhD study of the ecological factors that might account for their recent increase in numbers.

- Rob Schuckard - to band a range of waders in the north of the South Island as part of the cooperative Australasian-wide study of wader movements.

- James O'Malley - to band Australasian Harriers and a range of waterfowl in the Manawatu as part of a MSc study of the environmental implications of using lead shot.

New "individual" permits were issued to Wilson and Garside, Schuckard and O'Malley, while the other programmes were added to existing "institutional" permits. The remaining application was declined in favour of having the birds banded under an earlier arrangement.

The Banding Committee did not meet during the year.

CHRIS CHALLIES
Banding Liaison Officer

University Student Research in 1999

University of Auckland School of Biological Sciences

Contacts: Dr Dianne Brunton, Assoc Prof M.C. Clout, Professor J.L. Craig.

Population dynamics and breeding biology of Common Diving Petrels. Emma Ross.

Chick mortality of North Island Saddlebacks on Tiritiri Matangi Island. Rosalie Stamp.

Factors influencing the breeding of Fairy Terns and White-fronted Terns. Darryl Jeffries.

Translocation studies of the Little Spotted Kiwi. Sibilla Girardet.

University of Waikato Department of Biological Sciences.

Contact: Dr J. Waas.

Colour preferences in native birds: implications for deterring non-target species from poisonous baits. Lynette Hartley.

Fluctuating asymmetries and population genetics in Kokako. Quannah Hudson.

Social facilitation in begging calls of Zebra Finches. Jennie Slater.

Social recognition in Blue Penguins. Sarah Winter.

Massey University Institute of Natural Resources - Ecology

Contact: Dr Murray Potter.

Stress and cortisone levels in captive and wild kiwi. Dominic Adams (jointly with Dr J. Cockrem)

Genetic variation in Weka populations throughout New Zealand. Anja Dale.

Population dynamics of the Mokoia Island Saddleback population, and implications for mainland reintroductions. Rob Davidson.

Reintroduction of NZ Robins to Wenderholm Reserve, and the cost to the source population in Tiritiri Matangi Island. Wendy Dimond.

Post-release behaviour of captive-reared kiwi chicks (Tongariro). Anna Grant.

Assessing the effects of new wind turbines in the Tararua Ranges on local bird communities. Lisa Mackenzie.

Breeding biology of Black Shags at Pencarrow, Wellington. Hilary McKinnon.

Factors affecting survival of North Island Brown Kiwi in marginal Taranaki farmland. Don Ravine.

Reintroduction of robins from Waimarino pine forest to Paengaroa Mainland Island, central North Island. Liz Raeburn.

The role of frugivorous native and introduced species in fruit dispersal on the central North Island Volcanic Plateau. Sara Treadgold.

The corticosterone response to stress due to bleeding, handling, captivity and translocation of Blackbirds. Mark Welch (jointly with Dr J. Cockrem).

Evolution and growth and fledging strategies in birds. John Aston.

Ecology of Black-fronted Terns and Banded Dotterels at Twizel. Rachel Keedwell.

Factors involved in population dynamics of the Australasian Gannet (Cape Kidnappers, Hawkes Bay). Brent Stephenson.

Massey University Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences Conservation Endocrinology Research Group Contact: Dr J. Cockrem.

Hormonal stimulation of breeding in quail. Ellen Bennett & Heather Hesterman.

Reproduction in quail. Wei Hang & Guy Hessel.

Thyroid hormones in quail. Sharon Henare.

Corticosterone and stress in quail. Raewyn Boyd.

Faecal steroids in Kakapo. Emma Hawke.

University of Canterbury Department of Zoology Contact: Dr Jim Briskie.

Male quality and song in Silvereyes. Craig Barnett.

Intelligence and problem-solving in Kea. Rachel Johnston.

Inbreeding and reproductive success in an isolated population of NZ Robins (Nelson Lakes and Motuara Island). Amanda Byrne.

Lincoln University Soil, Plant and Ecological Sciences Division

Ecology Research Group
Contact: Kerry-Jayne Wilson.

Habitat requirements and biology of endangered Chatham Oystercatcher. Frances Schmechel.

Burrow occupancy and related behaviours of Broad-billed Prions on South East Island, Chatham Islands. Nicolette Was.

Exploiting differences in habitat selection and behaviour of the endangered Chatham Petrel and abundant Broad-billed Prion to alleviate burrow competition. Wendy Sullivan.

Foraging routes and energy consumption of breeding Royal Albatrosses on Campbell Island. Tina Troup.

The effect of road mortality on local

populations of Pukeko (Christchurch).
Clare Washington.

Skylarks as indicators for sustainable farming in New Zealand (Canterbury Plains). Stefan Thomson.

Ecological correlates and management of bird damage in a Canterbury orchard. Nigel Watkins.

Foraging ecology of Keruru and Bellbirds in a south Canterbury forest remnant. Mandy Ridley.

University of Otago
Department of Zoology

Contacts: Dr Henrik Moller, Dr Ian Jamieson, Dr L.S. Davis.

Henrik Moller has a major role in the collaborative research programme on Titi Island muttonbirds (Stewart Island), on which a number of students are working.

Compiled by E.C. YOUNG

Birding in Taveuni

Margaret and I recently returned from a most enjoyable holiday on the island of Taveuni in Fiji. Taveuni is the third largest of the Fijian islands and is an hour and a half by air north east of Nadi in a very small plane.

Taveuni is the most mountainous of the Fiji Islands, and a large part is protected as a national park. This, together with the fact that the mongoose has never been introduced here, makes it an excellent place for birds with over 100 species. Some of these are endemic or have very restricted ranges on other islands.

There are lots of places to explore, both on foot or with a 4WD vehicle. Two of the walks we did were the Lavena Coastal Walkway and the Bouma Falls Walkway, both of them established by a New Zealand conservation group. We also met driver/guides for the top of the Des Voeux Mountain and inland.

We saw 46 bird species, which included most of the special birds, such as the Silktail, Orange Dove, Fiji Goshawk, Many-coloured Fruit Dove, Blue-crested Flycatcher, Red Shining-parrot, Fiji Shrikebill, Giant Forest Honeyeater, Wattled Honeyeater and Orange-breasted Honeyeater.

We spent seven days on Taveuni and enjoyed every minute. The next four days we spent at the Warwick Hotel on Viti Levu, and with very few birds to watch other than mynas and Collared Lories we spent our time sightseeing, snorkelling and reading books.

We recommend Taveuni as an excellent place to explore and for bird watching. We stayed at Coconut Cove in a beach cottage with our own private beach. It was ideal for watching frigatebirds, Brown Boobies and other seabirds with a telescope from our balcony or binoculars from our deckchairs.

JOHN BRIERLEY



Black Fantail Photo: David Riddell

Black Fantails in Waikato

While we tend to think of black Fantails as an exclusively South Island phenomenon, this colour phase does occasionally turn up in the North Island. It is most often seen around Wellington, suggesting that some South Island birds may cross Cook Strait, but records occasionally come from our northern regions.

Two reports of black Fantails have been received in the Waikato in the past 12 months, most recently one on the outskirts of Hamilton at Rototuna in March. Another (see photo) frequented a garden about five kilometres away, in the suburb of Pukete, in October 1998. It was noted as being particularly confiding, and paired with a pied bird. The pair nested, and sat for a couple of days before the black bird and the eggs disappeared, presumably predated.

Prior to this the most recent report of a black Fantail in the Waikato was alongside the Piako River at Waitoa in March 1997.

DAVID RIDDELL

Don and Muriel Stracy write of an albino Welcome Swallow on the eastern side of Lake Wairarapa on 20 January 1981 (see Kathleen Harrison's report of a white swallow, *OSNZNews* 90). One of a flock of normally coloured birds, they note it was almost continually harassed by the other birds.

Karl Kenyon Award

John Warham (retired from the Zoology Department, University of Canterbury) recently returned from the 26th annual meeting of the Pacific Seabird Group, held in Blaine, Washington State. He had been invited to deliver a special plenary address at the annual dinner, and was presented with the 1999 Karl Kenyon Lifetime Achievement Award for his research on petrels and other seabirds on the Pacific region.

This research group is composed mainly of professional ornithologists. Dr Warham was impressed with the quality of the papers presented, particularly by the younger participants.

NZ Wader Study Group

The NZWSG had only moderate success with its banding programme this summer season. This was due mainly to the fact that waders are now roosting in areas quite difficult to catch in, primarily brought about by habitat changes of the past two or three years at Jordan's Farm on the Kaipara and at Miranda in the Firth of Thames.

In the past 12 months we have assisted in several other studies, which have included blood samples of South Island Pied Oystercatchers in the Manukau and Kaipara Harbours in a study of heavy metals being carried out by NIWA. Another study is looking at mercury levels in the feathers of Red Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits, also by NIWA. A third study is looking for avian viruses that might be brought to New Zealand by Arctic waders, picked up as they pass through east Asia. NZWSG is planning a joint project with Alaska involving Bar-tailed Godwits but details are still to be finalised.

Rob Schuckard (OSNZ Nelson) is setting up a wader banding project in the Nelson region. As this is the most important wader area in New Zealand outside the Auckland region is it very exciting that some work is finally starting there.

In Australia, the Australasian Wader Study Group had another remarkable expedition to Broome in August-October 1998, with 15,000 waders banded and flagged (yellow). A great deal of other data was gathered and much of that will be published in the coming year, mostly in *The Stilt*. Two of the Red Knots banded there in August were caught on the Firth of Thames in January 1999 - the first birds caught in New Zealand from NW Australia. Staff from the Broome Bird Observatory continue to catch waders in small numbers throughout the year.

The AWSG has been working internationally on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The chairman Jim Wilson and past chairman Mark Barter are at present in China searching for the key stopover and refuelling site for Red Knots on their northward migration. As yet the main area for these birds has not been found.

The Queensland Wader Study Group has just completed the second year of a three year study on the migrant waders of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Chairman Peter Driscoll is the project leader and a great deal of data was gathered between mid February and mid April 1999. Many birds use the gulf as a staging area on northward migration. Some are moving in quite unexpected ways and Peter will be trying to make sense of the data in the near future - it will make interesting reading.

The QWSG also undertakes all the wader counts in the state, and is involved

in various wader studies, particularly in the Moreton Bay area near Brisbane.

The Victorian Wader Study Group, under the leadership of Clive Minton (presently in the US, banding Red Knots migrating northwards from South America) continues to band large numbers of waders, particularly Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers. Some Eastern Curlews were also fitted with satellite transmitters in March 1999.

There is also some banding taking place in Japan, but mostly on Sanderlings and Grey-tailed Tattlers, and as yet none have been seen in New Zealand.

A protocol for colour flags is close to being formulated for the whole flyway, and it seems that in the near future two colour combinations will have to be used in order to allow all those countries that wish to take part to have a unique combination. At the moment yellow is used in NW Australia, orange in Victoria, white in New Zealand, green in Queensland and blue in Japan.

AWSG, VWSG, QWSG and NZWSG all put out regular bulletins, journals and newsletters. If any OSNZ members are interested in these I can supply details.

Paul Sagar continues to coordinate results of New Zealand wader census figures. Results from 1983-1994 have just been published in the wader issue of *Notornis*.

ADRIAN RIEGEN
Convenor NZWSG

Fish and Game NZ

Fish and Game New Zealand is a crown entity and manages waterfowl and upland game birds and their habitat on behalf of more than 36,000 licence holders. Management of these birds includes setting rules for how many birds can be taken by hunters and at what time of the year. Game bird species include Canada Geese, ducks, swans, pheasants and quail.

Fish and Game New Zealand is not just focused on hunting. The organisation and its 70 staff are actively involved in conservation projects that benefit both game birds and protected species. Wetlands, in particular, are a focus for the conservation work we undertake. Once considered swamps and drained for farmland, housing and commercial use, they are now considered world-wide as being a very important component of fresh water ecosystems.

Wetland conservation work is undertaken with money generated from licence sales. One dollar from every game bird licence also goes to the Game Bird Habitat Trust Board which offers grants to game bird habitat conservation projects around New Zealand. In the six years the board has been making grants,

\$295,000 has been distributed to 24 conservation projects. Fish and Game is actively involved in purchasing, protecting and enhancing wetlands because they provide important habitat for game birds and protected birds.

As part of Fish and Game New Zealand's ongoing game bird management field staff undertake aerial counts of all game bird waterfowl species. These counts are combined with hunter phone surveys so staff can establish hunting pressure on the birds. From these indicators regional regulations are drafted, approved by the elected regional Fish and Game Council and then approved by the Minister of Conservation.

Game birds are hunted and harvested at a rate that is sustainable and in most cases at levels that are appropriate to all people, including farmers whose crops birds occasionally feed on. However some bird populations are unable to be managed through traditional hunting. Reasons for this include the intelligence of the birds, the rugged terrain they inhabit and the almost endless source of good quality food. Paradise Shelducks and Canada Geese are in this group. The aim of Fish and Game New Zealand is to achieve desired population levels through recreational hunting. If this is not sufficient, then staff sometimes undertake population control operations. In most cases this is achieved through organised hunts using a number of recreational hunters, but occasionally Canada Geese are shot from helicopters.

The most common population control method besides recreational hunting takes place in January when the birds are moulting and unable to fly. Staff move the birds into holding pens where they are stunned and beheaded. This method may seem crude but it is the most humane method available. It is approved by both the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

TOM FRASER
Executive Officer

Wrybill Study Update

Our banding programme has gone well this season. We spent more time ourselves down in the Mackenzie Basin, while Mike Elliott and Richard Duirs banded a good number of chicks. We have now banded 118 adults on the Tasman and Tekapo Rivers with individual colour combinations, all of which contain orange. In addition 25 chicks were colour banded this season, of which at least 14 are known to have fledged. The result of this is that when you find a flock of Wrybills this winter, roughly one in 38 should be our's on average.

Work on the Tekapo River didn't go quite according to plan this season. Last year productivity in the area was very low; we suspected predation of nests and chicks was the problem and were interested to see if the same happened again this year. However Lake Tekapo got a bit full, so ECNZ opened the flood gates. Not surprisingly we lost all of the low lying nests. Some on higher ground survived, while some pairs that lost relaid.

Ironically most pairs succeeded this year, probably because the increased flow rates meant that the usual mammalian predators (such as cats and ferrets) could not get out to the islands. We certainly couldn't. Unlike a natural flood, which is usually over in a few days or a week, this one went on for several months. In a couple of places we could see large chicks on islands in the river but couldn't get out to band them - very frustrating.

As you will see in the wader issue of *Notornis*, we found one of our birds breeding at one year old, about 1.5 km from its own natal site on the upper Tasman River. This had not been recorded previously, and was a real surprise. Only time will tell if it happens regularly; with quite a few chicks banded this season we are in a better position to learn more later in the year. Living in the South Island means we'll also be able to survey more riverbeds early in the season, and check for young birds prospecting or breeding away from their natal site.

We have also found two of our adults (among a flock of about 90 birds) staging at Lake Ellesmere on the way north this autumn. Both stayed around for at least several weeks. Next season we will monitor this area more regularly and try catching a few birds, to see whether they are moulting before they migrate. Another bird, an adult male, briefly stopped at the Manawatu Estuary and then moved on. It would appear that they do not all make the journey non-stop.

Next season we also hope to band some birds on rivers closer to Christchurch, probably the Ashley and Waimakariri. This will increase our sample sizes and provide us with another study area to compare with the Mackenzie.

Finally, many thanks to all those who made the effort to record and send in sightings. Please keep them coming - those individually colour banded birds give us a wonderful opportunity to collect a wealth of information on survival, pair bonds (we've already recorded our first Wrybill divorce), movement patterns, and so on. Sightings can be sent to the Banding Office, PO Box 10420, Wellington, or sent directly to us by email (dowding@voyager.co.nz) or post (PO Box 36-274, Christchurch).

JOHN DOWDING/ELAINE MURPHY
(courtesy of N.Z. Wader Study Group newsletter No. 13)

Obituary Roy Markham Weston

"I cannot adequately explain the fascination which the wild birds have for me, and, in these days, for an increasing multitude of people. Is it their flight, so mysterious even yet to us, their grace and beauty, their fullness of abounding life, the interest of their nesting, the charm of their varied surroundings, the exhilaration of the quest which lures us forth into the open? It is all these and more, and fortunate are they who feel the thrill of enthusiasm for nature and in nature, be the special interest birds or whatever it be" (Herbert K. Job, from *Wild Things*).

This could be Roy Weston talking, because Roy was always interested in birds and wildlife, even if sometimes he actually shot them but then only for the table.

Roy was born at Fortis Green, in north London, went to school at Haileybury College in Hertfordshire, and even in his school days went nesting and birding. Roy met Gladys, married her in 1940, and they have been best mates ever since. Gladys also enjoyed birdwatching and the natural world with Roy. They have two children, Jill and Terry.

Roy had various jobs in England before his big adventure to live in New Zealand. He was a stockbroker for a while, then a pig farmer. Roy and Gladys moved to New Zealand in 1956 and settled in Kawerau in the Bay of Plenty, where he worked for the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company until his retirement about 25 years ago.

Since his arrival in the Bay of Plenty, Roy has been continually involved with various conservation and wildlife protection groups on a voluntary basis. These include Rotorua Conservancy Fishing and Shooting Federation (including terms as president and secretary, eventually being made a life member), and as a representative of the federation attended meetings of the council of the North Island Acclimatisation Society, the Kawerau Anglers' Club (of which he was president, vice-president, then life member). He was a member of Forest and Bird since 1956.

Roy was appointed a member of the Guardians of the Rotorua Lakes, a member of the Ohiwa Harbour Joint Committee for Recreation and served on the central North Island Wildlife Conservancy Council. He was also a member of many other groups, including Miranda Naturalists' Trust and Wingspan - Birds of Prey Trust. Whatever group he belonged to, they always benefited from his unflinching support and wise advice.

Roy was a member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand since 1956, and was Regional Representative for the Bay of Plenty from 1956 to 1993 - an amazing achievement.



Roy Markham Weston

He was a regular attender of OSNZ annual general meetings. Roy was a staunch supporter of retaining and restoring wetlands for both waterfowl and waders. The latter he followed particularly at Ohiwa Harbour. He was particularly talented at preparing submissions and giving evidence. He was involved with patrolling the sand dunes at Ohiwa and instigated the making of Ohope Spit a wildlife refuge by Internal Affairs.

Brian Bell commented that Roy was a shooter when it was legal to shoot godwits. This was still apparent when he went to one of the OSNZ Farewell Spit study courses. He would make out to line up and shoot as the godwits flew in over the dunes to high tide roosts. This upset some of the very protectionist members who failed to appreciate that Roy was a very strong conservationist at heart.

While Roy was primarily a waterfowl enthusiast, he took an interest in all other birds and the outdoors. Roy wrote a newspaper column for over five years during the 1970s in the *Kawerau Gazette*. The topics were always on some aspect of birds, and he used the pseudonym of "The Galloping Major". This nickname stayed with him from that time.

When thinking of Roy Weston, one cannot help but remember the words of King George V - "The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust, we must account for it to those who come after." If there was ever a man who believed in, fought for, and lived the principles implied in these words, it was Roy Markham Weston.

JOHN BRIERLEY

Eastern Curlews back on track

The joint Queensland Wader Study Group/Wild Bird Society of Japan Eastern Curlew project is now in its third year. Thirteen satellite transmitters were deployed during February - five at Moreton Bay, Queensland and eight at Westernport, Victoria - the latter by the Victorian Wader Study Group on behalf of the QWSG. All transmitters were placed on large female birds that were already well into breeding plumage and fattening up prior to departure on northward migration in early March.

Each deployed transmitter sends a signal via satellite every two days, giving the position of the bird. It is hoped to determine migration routes, stopover sites, lengths of each migratory stage, duration of stopovers, as well as the ultimate destinations on the breeding grounds. In 1998 one bird from Moreton Bay reached a stopover site in Tokyo Bay by mid March and had reached Vladivostok in Russia by 31 March. To date this year birds have reached China and Taiwan.

More of the Eastern Curlews have been on the move in the March 21-27 period. Alphonse, from Moreton Bay, flew 5,500 km non-stop to the central Philippines in 4 1/2 days, averaging a ground speed of just over 50 kph. Wendy and Sally, from Moreton Bay, have flown 2,800 km non-stop to the Digoel Estuary in south east Irian Jaya. They averaged at last 50 kph. Min has remained in Townsville and Sheryl hasn't yet left Moreton Bay.

Gloria and Jenny left Westernport to the same part of Irian Jaya as the Moreton Bay bird - Digoel Estuary. This must be an important stopover area, at least for Eastern Curlews. Gloria averaged at least 60 kph, and Jenny over 80 kph on the first day, helped by a strong south-west wind.

In contrast Doris backtracked from near Fraser Island, Queensland, to the northern NSW coast. And Julie has returned from the same area all the way back to Westernport.

CLIVE MINTON/PETER DRISCOLL
(courtesy of *The Tattler* No. 19)

A Banding Mystery

The 1998 Northland region passerine banding season was the best yet, with over 700 birds comprising 11 species. The same two sites were used, with the bulk of the birds being banded at Wren Greechan's kiwifruit vine at Kiripaka. The catch of the season was a Fernbird, possibly en route to the wetland below where Wren recalls sightings of Fernbirds having been made many years ago. We also netted a swallow late in the season.

There was one perplexing recovery this year - a 13 gm Silvereye banded at

Kiripaka on 28 June 1998 was reported from the Waikato on 5 October. The Silvereye was found freshly dead in Te Awamutu and the band delivered to a local DoC office. This was an exciting find, except that the circumstances of the recovery did not help - the bird was found dead on the front fender of a vehicle. Moreover the details of the owner and the recent journeys of that vehicle remained a mystery - it had driven past Wren's perhaps?

After some local sleuthing drew a blank, we decided to put out a press release, encouraging the driver of the "hit and run" to come forward. This did the trick. On 17 January, I finally got to talk to Tracy Morgan, ex-Telecom worker, whose fleet vehicle had collected the bird somewhere within the boundaries of Kawhia - Arapuni - Otorohanga - Ohaupo, ie the Te Awamutu area. Te Awamutu is 275 km from Kiripaka, but the accident could have occurred 260-285 km from Kiripaka.

By the end of August each year, most Silvereyes have left the Kiripaka site. The timing of this Waikato recovery (early October) is within the Silvereye breeding season. This bird was, therefore, almost certainly back on its breeding grounds, rather than en route there.

Clearly some "Northland" Silvereyes are actually breeders from other parts of New Zealand, and spend all or part of the winter in Northland. Keep checking those front grilles!

RAY PIERCE

22nd IOC Proceedings

The complete proceedings of the 22nd Ornithological Congress, held in Durban in August 1998, will be available on CD-ROM from July 1999. This CD-ROM represents a state of the art review of modern ornithology at the end of the millennium.

These proceedings contain 3200 pages of ten full length plenary papers, 215 full length symposia papers, and the complete abstracts of the round table discussions, orals and posters presented at the congress. The content represents avian academic research from over 50 countries, often reflecting international co-operation.

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The distributors have agreed to a reduced price of £47 sterling until the end of August 1999, when the price increases to £97 sterling.

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Reviews

Petyt, C. *Farewell Spit - A Changing Landscape*. Terracottage Books 1999. 190 pp. ISBN 0-473-05539-2. \$45.00 (softback).

This is a terrific read. Chris Petyt's thorough and wide-ranging research has resulted in a comprehensive look at Farewell Spit's formation, Maori history, European discovery, settlers, shipwrecks, the lighthouses and keepers, the movement to declare a sanctuary, tourists, vegetation, birds and other fauna. The book concludes with information for visitors, a checklist of plants, bibliography and index.

In keeping with the title, the theme is change on the Spit - like its sweeping tides and the often savage winds, Farewell Spit is aptly portrayed as a dynamic, ever-changing environment. As tidal ebb and flow rule the lives of so many of the birds, the tides of change, especially since European colonisation, have been skilfully interwoven as a theme into the narrative. Research into the book has drawn the far wider Maori and European history of New Zealand into the context of the lives - human, plant and animal - of those living on or visiting the Spit.

The writing style makes for an easy read. This reader was initially disappointed that individual chapters were not referenced, despite careful noting of the source of all photographs - and there are no references in the text, though the bibliography at the end appears comprehensive and would lead an enquirer to the individual sources. Likewise the excellent maps, which have the place names so frequently mentioned in the text, are not found until pp. 176 and 190.

The book's cover is a disappointingly light weight card which curls at the edges, but perhaps the greatest disappointment is that the usually excellent photographs are compromised by poor quality laser reproduction of the originals.

Birds are of course a dominant theme throughout. Chapter 11, covering 35 pages, is an annotated list of all species ever recorded on the Spit and

its adjacent Farm Park and is accurate to the end of 1998. The list is very impressive and highlights the Spit's importance as a sanctuary, if that were necessary.

Individual points of criticism notwithstanding, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone who has ever visited this very special part of New Zealand. Chris Petyt's book will help anchor the changing Farewell Spit in the prominent position it deserves.

Farewell Spit - A Changing Landscape is available from the author at Terracottage Books, Tukuruia, Takaka RD2 for \$45.00 (post and packaging included).

TONY CROCKER

Parrots - A guide to the Parrots of the World. Tony Juniper & Mike Parr 1998. Pica Press, Sussex. 584 pp. ISBN 1-8733403-40-2 (hardback). GBP 35.00.

The dust jacket of this book describes it as "the first book created primarily for field identification of parrots", and in the introduction it is stated that one of the motivations for producing this work was the "lack of a comprehensive identification handbook that could be used by customs officers and those with wildlife trade law enforcement". I do not believe that the book has succeeded in either of these aims.

Firstly, the design of the book makes it impractical to use as a field guide. Its very size (24.5 x 17.5 x 4cm) makes it impossible to slip into the pocket of a field jacket, and its weight would make an unpleasant addition to a backpack. Secondly the descriptions of species are not arranged on a regional basis, but follow the order of genera in such works as Forshaw's *Parrots of the World* and the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. For example, an observer trying to identify a small green parrot high in a tree in India would be better served by a section labelled "Indian Subcontinent" rather than being forced to read through the text to find out if it was a Vernal Hanging Parrot or one of the similar hanging parrots from Indonesia. As to its value as a guide for law enforcement officers, I am not persuaded that the illustrations and descriptions of species are such that a non-specialist would always be able to distinguish between two very similar species.

I have based my analysis of this volume on reports of the parrots of Australasia and the south Pacific region, as this is the area I know most about. These are set out in typical field guide style, with descriptions under such headings as "Identification", "Distribution and Status" and "Ecology". I detected no inaccuracies in these descriptions, and the text is pleasingly free from typographical errors. However

a map on page 373 showing the various islands on which Kakapo can now be found locates Maud Island as being adjacent to Farewell Spit in Golden Bay, rather than in the Marlborough Sounds. A brief list of references accompanies each entry. Illustrations are in a style familiar among modern field guides, and are of satisfactory quality, although they lack the indication of critical field identification markers.

The UK price of this book suggests that it would be expensive in New Zealand. On asking myself if I would buy it, I feel that it does not provide sufficient enough advance on other parrot books to warrant the expenditure. However for somebody who does not own any books on parrots and who wants a reliable and up-to-date summary on them, this would probably be a suitable addition to their bookshelves.

W.L. ORMOND

Brown, Charles R. *Swallow Summer*. 1998 Lincoln, Nebraska. 371 pp. ISBN 0-8032-6145-4.

This is a detailed account of a 15 year study of a population of Cliff Swallows *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* in Nebraska. A blend of description, anecdote and science, it would probably be of interest to anyone engaged in a long term species study, but of very marginal interest to the general reader in this part of the world.

Lever, Christopher. *They Dined on Eland: The Story of Acclimatisation Societies*. 1998 London. 224 pp. ISBN 1 870948 59 2.

This book traces the history of the Acclimatisation Society of the United Kingdom, founded in 1860, and its sister societies in Scotland, the Channel Islands, France, Russia, the USA, Hawaiian Islands, Australia and New Zealand. In Australia and New Zealand members of the acclimatisation societies, recently arrived from Britain, looked on their new countries as bereft of such attractions as familiar wild flowers, melodious songbirds and animals of the chase - omissions which they sought to rectify by the acclimatisation of British plants and animals. The book gives an interesting insight into the development of the professional study of natural history in Victorian Britain and throughout the world. It also provides some background behind the appearance of all those exotic species so common to all of us.

Mearns, Barbara and Richard. *The Bird Collectors*. 1998 London. ISBN 0 12 487440

Skin collections and associated data have provided essential material for basic ornithological studies on classification, evolution, conservation and the geographical distribution of species. All the great bird artists have worked from skin collections and today skins are still used by artists who

illustrate modern field guides, as well as by banders, rarities committees and research scientists.

Nevertheless bird collectors such as Andreas Reischek (who incidentally makes no appearance in this book) have more often been reviled than praised. This volume discusses the importance of skin collectors and assesses them in proper historical perspective, while also challenging negative perceptions. There are also accounts of individual collectors and their adventures in the field. An appendix lists current bird collections held around the world.

KEITH WOODLEY

Regional Roundup Far North

I opened *OSNZ News* 90 and, as I got to the Regional Roundup section, I realised that I had again missed the deadline! Like Gwenda, I seem to have a lot on my plate at the moment, and organising it is quite a task. So I apologise to Far North members - I know there is a lot going on. I would certainly hope that the rest of the country doesn't think that we don't get up to anything in the wettest part of New Zealand.

Since my last contribution we have had two meetings. In December Sandra Heihei, DoC's Kukupa (NZ Pigeon) advocate, informed us about the unique qualities of our local bird and of the grim plight they face in Tai Tokerau (Northland). Sandra talked to us about the Kukupa education programme for schools in the area and showed us some paintings and poems that the children had produced.

In April we had our AGM. Unfortunately our guest speaker was called away, but we had a good catch up, waded through administration and watched a National Geographic video *The Secret Life of Cats*. It is hot off the press (so to speak), and has not been shown in New Zealand yet. The reason that we were lucky enough to see a copy early was that it stars the local RR and Richard Parrish, working on NZ Fairy Terns at Mangawhai in 1998.

Beach patrols have been continuing in earnest by our keen and dedicated beach patrol teams. In February Graeme Taylor confirmed that a bird found by beach patrollers on 90 Mile Beach late last year was indeed a Leach's Storm Petrel (this still needs verifying by the Rare Birds Committee). This is the 7th record for New Zealand (the 4th beachcast, plus three live birds seen at the Chatham Islands).

Several members are helping out with the annual kiwi counts done in May every year. Anthea Goodwin and Gerry Clark visited the Three Kings in the *Totorore* in early January.

Among the highlights of the trip were 11 Buller's Mollymawks on the water around the boat.

We have quite a few activities coming up in the next few months and welcome any OSNZers heading our way from other regions.

(Leigh Honnor)

Northland

During December and January, seven people from Whangarei had a busy and productive time at Taiko Camp on Chatham Island. No Taiko were captured at the light site unfortunately, but some Grey-backed Storm Petrels provided interest and entertainment.

Anniversary Weekend saw a group of us based at Pukenui for the annual Far North lakes survey. We were not able to complete them all due to fewer people being available to help than is usual, so a couple of weeks later some of us stayed at the Sweetwaters Station shearers' quarters to complete the task. We were rewarded with excellent views of a bittern close to the road as we returned home at dusk.

Margaret Dowdell and her team of helpers started the new year off by banding 69 Black-backed Gull chicks at Waipu oxidation ponds on a hot and humid day (as it always is!). They also experienced adult birds attacking chicks, as mentioned by Lloyd Esler in a recent newsletter. We have not had this happen before.

Our first meeting for the year was in February and we were fortunate to have John Nicole explain the mysteries of taxidermy to us, complete with excellent diagrams, photos and models - so that's how it's done!

The end of February saw us braving bulls in their paddocks to carry out the annual Pouto Lakes census. Fortunately the Paradise Shelduck cull did not happen in the Pouto area that weekend so we counted good numbers of birds on most lakes.

Throughout the summer Audrey Williams and her team have supported the Department of Conservation shorebird protection workers at Mangawhai and Waipu. This season was not as good as last season, but three Fairy Tern chicks fledged successfully. Unfortunately one of the Auckland Zoo reared chicks was found dead, and the other has not been sighted for some time.

The Whangarei Harbour census went ahead as planned on 7 March. My area at the port was practically cleared of birds by a large truck driving between the mud pans to dump rubbish, so I got off lightly.

The post-breeding count of New Zealand Dotterels was carried out on 20

March. Margaret, Peter and I counted 27 birds, including five colour banded birds on Waipu Spit, so we were pleased with our result.

Beach patrols have continued monthly as usual with some interesting finds. Audrey Williams found a Grey Ternlet on the east coast, Ruth and David Crockett and Den Carter found an Amokura (Red-tailed Tropicbird) on the east coast at Whananaki. The most interesting find is at present still to be identified and was found on the west coast beach patrol. This bird will be sent to Wellington to solve the mystery.

At our April and May meetings John Nicole introduced and showed a very interesting two part video identifying South African birds. The range of birdsong and calls and the stunning plumage of some birds was amazing. Well worth travelling to see!

The regional AGM was held in March and we are ready for another busy year's birding.

(Lorna Simpkin)

Auckland

The Tiritiri Matangi survey in March saw members complete twelve years of spring bird counts and 13 years of autumn bird counts, as well as seven years before 1993 working on rat eradication. The overall picture is that bird numbers have continued to increase throughout this period as a result of the revegetation programme. There has been a greater increase since the rats have gone, and the results to date point to a continuing increase in bird numbers into the future.

The New Zealand Dotterel census was an outstanding success. Record numbers were recorded at Mangawhai and Papakanui Island. Well done Auckland members and friends - it was a stirring effort. An additional highlight for members counting at Tapora on Saturday 20 March was a Large Sand Dotterel and a Mongolian dotterel, both in breeding plumage, standing side by side amongst the New Zealand Dotterel flock. Another Large Sand Dotterel was present but not in breeding plumage.

15 NZ Fairy Terns were accounted for during the dotterel census weekend and Easter weekend, 55 Variable Oystercatchers were recorded at Waiheke Island and 22 at a Waitemata flock site, also during the NZ Dotterel census weekend. On 26 February a Long-tailed Cuckoo was seen over Titirangi, and in late March another was recorded at Chatswood in Birkenhead, and in February there was a sizable covey of Californian Quail recorded at Mangawhai - 24 in all, with two males and three females, the rest being juveniles.

In February a beach patrol on the east coast found 70 birds. However the

walk in the Hunua Ranges on 14 February, looking and listening for Kokako, brought no result, as none were seen or heard. 11 Royal Spoonbills were seen on the South Kaipara, and at Waiwera a male Shore Plover continues to be resident. Slightly unusual on 26 February was a Red-billed Gull at Titirangi flying inside a canopy of large trees. The field trip (on 21 February) with South Auckland and Waikato was a good day out, with two Great Knots being seen.

Also in February was a Black-fronted Tern in non-breeding plumage at Okiritoto Stream on Muriwai Beach with a White-fronted Tern, then again at high tide on the same day at Papakanui Island. A Cook's Petrel was found beside highway 1 at Windy Ridge, Warkworth.

NZ Robins have been released at Wenderholm - ten each of males, females and juveniles.

Brian Welsh, who works at the Auckland Zoo with Martin Bell, talked of rearing birds in captivity. In 1986 they reared two Fairy Tern chicks for release, but as there was no post-release monitoring done nothing is known of their fate. In 1998 the zoo hatched a Fairy Tern but through misfeeding the chick died. Late in 1998 two Fairy Terns hatched at the zoo, weighing eight grams. In the enclosure there was a model mother Fairy Tern, as well as a tape which played Fairy Tern calls. They started eating seven fish per hour, and by the end of the period in captivity were eating 21 fish per hour. They were in an enclosure with White-fronted Terns which proved to be greedy feeders and would "out eat" the Fairy Terns. The two chicks were released at Mangawhai in February. Unfortunately one of them was found dead at Papakanui late in February. Another first was a solo parent raising a chick at Mangawhai.

The zoo also released six dotterels at Stillwater. Their aviary had to be made mosquito proof, because of the concern that they may develop avian malaria, a pox not found in the wild, or at least not so far detected.

Shaarina Boyd from DoC is concerned about Rainbow Lorikeets and their threat to New Zealand's biodiversity. A breeder in Auckland admits to releasing 15 birds, hoping to get them to breed in the wild. This absolute stupidity brought him to court, but he was not prosecuted and got off on a technicality. All sightings of Rainbow Lorikeets are to be reported to DoC. The birds could end up in flocks of thousands, and their foods overlap with those of Tui, Stitchbirds, Bellbirds, parakeets and Kaka. They could also carry disease, and become a horticultural pest as they have in some parts of Australia.

David Pye talked to members about Shoal Bay, which is mainly a wetland but has shellbanks and mangroves. The vegetation of the area also includes *Sarcicornia*, rushes and saltmarsh

ribbonwood. Native celery is found amongst a grassy area and common plants are bachelor's buttons and, in really wet areas, sea primrose. While large areas have been reclaimed, there is plenty of birdlife - 24 species in total, including Reef Heron, Caspian Tern, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt, NZ Dotterel, Pukeko, Mallard and Paradise Shelducks. Three Variable Oystercatcher eggs have hatched and fledged, and a pair of NZ Dotterels fledged two chicks, then re-nested and fledged two more. The second set of birds were caught and banded.

Mike Graham talked about Tiritiri Matangi Island. The revegetation plan for the island began in 1986. The idea was to create a habitat for birds, then to monitor their populations. Children were encouraged to be involved. There are seven transects, and they and two listening posts are monitored twice a year.

(Rae McGregor)

South Auckland

The South Auckland meeting on 9 March was the annual meeting where the Regional Representative's report and financial report were presented to an enthusiastic audience of regular attendees. Following discussion of the annual report and ideas for future events, we then viewed some photos and slides taken by members during the year.

The meeting in April consisted of a talk by Terry Hatch, one of our members who is now a well known TV personality on the gardening shows. He showed us excerpts of his video record of a recent trip to South Africa. This mainly consisted of interesting plants, but occasionally a bird would be seen either feeding on the flowers or the foliage. This gave one of our younger, newer members, a recent immigrant from South Africa, an opportunity to show his bird identification skills. One of the highlights for the writer was to see the film of a type of pine tree which is several thousand years old that has only two leaves in its life.

At our May meeting Tony Wilson, one of our members who lives at Tairua, gave us a very interesting and excellent presentation of birds and animals encountered during a trip to southern Africa several years ago. This meeting was noticeable for an influx of Waikato members who had spent the day in Auckland and called in on their way home. There was also a good mixture of Auckland members which gave South Auckland members an inferiority complex as we were far outnumbered. However it was good to have the input from other regions and to have them share in the discussions.

On the bird front there have been some interesting sightings among the huge flocks of Arctic migrants before they left. Tony Habraken and David Lawrie believe that they have finally got sufficient evidence to claim a sighting of an American Golden Plover among the flock of plovers at Kidds on the Manukau Harbour. They have suspected a bird during the previous two summers, but have not been able to obtain the final proof. The sighting is presently being prepared for forwarding to the Rare Birds Committee for verification.

During March there was a flock of 59 golden plovers including the above bird, and two White-winged Black Terns, one of which has been present for most of the summer. It would be interesting to know if these were the birds which were previously seen in Taranaki. There were also 21 Red-necked Stints, 10 Curlew Sandpipers, six Little Terns, and up to 7,000 knots and 5,000 godwits mixed in amongst the 6,000 South Island Pied Oystercatchers.

In the Miranda area Keith Woodley reports that he has had recent sightings of two Black-tailed Godwits, three Marsh Sandpipers, three Curlew Sandpipers (one in full breeding plumage), a Whimbrel, a White Heron and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

During the NZ Dotterel survey a Siberian Tattler was sighted at the gravel pits north of Whakatiwai, while at Rangipo a Terek Sandpiper was with the Wrybills.

On 22 April we had our first report from Port Waikato of one Cattle Egret returning from Australia. At about the same time we also had a report of 28 Galahs at Mangatawhiri. These are part of the flock which is occasionally seen in autumn and winter.

(David Lawrie)

Waikato

The highlight of our informal February meeting was a talk about Stephens Island by Bruce Posthill. This concentrated less on birds and more on landscapes, seascapes, history and tuatara. It will certainly be remembered as one of the highlights of this year.

Our February field trip to Kidds at Karaka for wader viewing saw us outnumbered, and not just by the birds. We were joined by members of OSNZ Auckland, OSNZ South Auckland and Franklin Forest and Bird, so that our total became 19. It was to be a very high tide and some people opted to stay on dry land and let the birds come to them. The rest of us sloshed through the mud and water to the shellbanks.

These waders of the human species separated into two flocks heading for different shellbanks, and once there

were kept separated by the rising tide. One group had the majority of the birds, but the other group had the Wrybills and the New Zealand Dotterels, and were able to record a number of band combinations. Some flag sightings of other species were recorded. Very large numbers of birds were present, including SIPO, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Great Knot, Turnstone, Wrybill, NZ Dotterel, Banded Dotterel, Pacific Golden Plover, Spur-winged Plover, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, White-winged Black Tern, White-faced Heron, Pied Shag, Pied Stilt, Welcome Swallow, Mallard and Black-backed Gull.

One of our March field trips was to the Miranda Shorebird Centre for autumn migration day, which for the last two years has been run in conjunction with the nearby Kaiaua Wine and Food Festival. This time the happy occasion was broken, when heavy wind and rain overnight and in the early morning caused the cancellation of the festival. The Miranda open day went ahead and improving weather allowed the hardier participants to go wader viewing in the afternoon after the indoor activities were completed.

Our regional AGM was held in March and the formal business was followed by a very interesting talk by Sue Moore on her experiences during a spell of work in the Chathams. Our annual census of Lake Waahi was carried out as usual in April before the shooting season, with total numbers of birds being well down on last year. In the case of Canada Geese this was easily explained by the recent shoot to control excessive numbers. Kerry Oates had us fascinated at our April meeting, describing Pitcairn Island and associated islands, and the efforts of a New Zealand team to eradicate rats there.

Field activities in the April/May period have included a training session on mist netting and passerine banding, five minute bird counts on Mt Kakepuku, monthly censuses of Rotoroa (Hamilton Lake) and Rotokaeo (Forest Lake), banding of adult Grey-faced Petrels, and a visit to Auckland Museum.

To start this visit, Dr Brian Gill took us on a conducted tour of the natural history galleries which have been revamped as part of the continuing renovation of the whole museum. Some of us have already enjoyed a visit to Te Papa in far-off Wellington, but others had not yet seen the current trend in presentation of exhibits. Our whole group was most impressed by what has been achieved in Auckland, especially as these developments have not received nearly as much publicity as has Te Papa.

Some recent bird sightings include a North Island Robin stealing a spider from a wasp in the Kaimai Range in January; at least six Royal spoonbills at

Aotea Harbour in February; three NZ Dabchicks on the Raglan Sewage Ponds in March; a juvenile White-fronted Tern at Lake Karapiro in March; 39 Cattle Egrets at Ngaroto in May.

This Waikato contribution ends on a sad note, as we remember Folkert Nieuwland who died on 7 April. Folkert had been a very active member in the past, and had served as Waikato Regional Representative as well as on Council. He will be sadly missed. A full tribute to him will be published in due course.

(Hugh Clifford)

Bay of Plenty

The boat trip to White Island in January was cancelled due to bad weather. However a group went on a tramp up Mt Tarawera and were rewarded with good views of Whiteheads and Long-tailed Cuckoos, with lots of pipits but no falcons or Banded Dotterels. A group from Hamilton did enjoy the rescheduled boat trip in February.

A small group made it to Kaituna Cut also in February and saw Banded and New Zealand Dotterels and a large flock of Grey Teal, but no sign of the Marsh Sandpiper. We then saw Turnstones and a Reef Heron at the Maketu Estuary.

March saw a good turn out of members at Bill Sloan's place, where we all enjoyed Rachael's delicious morning tea while watching a video by Brian Chudleigh on Blue Ducks and Weka which he had filmed last year in the Motu Road area. We set off keen to see the real thing but it was, alas, not to be, though it is a beautiful area and a great place for a picnic.

Interesting birds sightings are two Eastern Rosellas in the Tarawera Forest on 22 April, a Wandering Tattler on White Island on 7 February, and a White Heron on 25 April at Matata Lagoon.

(John Brierley)

Hawkes Bay

Interesting sightings recently include four White-winged Black Terns and two tattlers at the Ahuriri Estuary. 22 SIPO was a good number for between the bridges in February. Rod Neverman reported a black Fantail in his parents' garden at Meeanee, only the second record we can find for Hawkes Bay.

Royal Spoonbills are back for the winter, and in record numbers - up to 73 birds, including a bird banded as a chick in Marlborough. The first spoonbills were recorded in June 1962, when nine were present, followed by apparently smaller numbers. Wayne and Margaret started recording them in 1982, and the results for that year and each year to 1999 are: 2, 2, 3, 8, 9, 15, 22, 20, 35, 42, 23, 34, 41, 56, 58, 44, 61, 73.

(Wayne Twydale)

Taranaki

The February field trip (held when the weather permitted) was to the QEII bush covenant owned by the Collier family and situated about 15 kms east of Eltham. Members of our branch have been asked by the South Taranaki Forest and Bird committee to carry out bird surveys in this large, steep covenant of 222 ha. before and during their pest control programme.

Rex Hartley, chairperson of the F & B group, showed members a Tomtit's nest built in the eaves of the covenant's hut. The birds successfully reared a brood and were never upset by the movement of people in, out and around their unique nesting site.

Members' reports in April indicate that there are healthy numbers of birds about. Of special interest was a report from Barry Hartley on the Banded Rails he has been continually observing at Mokau. Confirmed sightings are of at least 10 adults and five chicks. Kaka have been seen on the South Waitaanga Forest (two), New Plymouth (one) and Egmont National Park (two). On 8 March a Shining Cuckoo was observed in an Egmont Village garden, but the householder's pleasure soon turned to rage when the bird began feasting on their healthy population of monarch butterfly caterpillars. It is generally thought by our members that these caterpillars are poisonous.

A walk along the Kahui track in Egmont National Park was the March day trip. Although bird numbers were not high, all species which were expected were seen. Also of note were many plants of *Coprosma grandifolia* laden with orange fruit. They were a feature of the track as the plants extended from the park boundary to the Kahui hut.

The South Taranaki District Council has requested this branch to undertake a bird survey of the Lake Rotokare Reserve, inland from Eltham and members have agreed to do so. A mystery bird seen at the Waiongana River mouth has been identified as a Lesser Knot. In mid-April a member's cat arrived at the back door in New Plymouth with a dead Long-tailed Cuckoo.

Records from coastal sites include 45 Banded Dotterels at the Oanui sand dunes, 5-600 White-fronted Terns at the Pungaere Stream area, five Cattle Egrets at Mokau, with 8+ near Waverly and other sightings elsewhere in north Taranaki. A Black-fronted Dotterel visited the disused oxidation ponds at Bell Block.

The May monthly trip was to Lake Rotokare. Fernbirds were heard calling, but there was no evidence of Spotless Crakes. Large numbers of Silvereyes were seen and they appeared to be feeding on the kahikatea fruit and the black berries of *Coprosma tenuicaulis*.

Two highlights from the May meeting deserve special mention. Barry showed a great video which he had taken of the Banded Rails at Mokau, with first class viewing of the birds skittering about the river and flats feeding. And on 2 May Peter Fryer visited the disused oxidation pond site, along with a lass exercising her horse and two women walking their dogs. When they had moved off Peter began checking the birds and noticed that one was different. With some patience and skill photos were taken, and Peter has submitted them to the Rare Birds Committee. He awaits confirmation of his sighting of an Oriental Pratincole!

(Rosemary Messenger)

Manawatu

Regular evening meetings and a field trip to Hawkes Bay have been successful, and have been supplemented by hosting a couple of visiting groups to the Manawatu Estuary - where the birds have been most obliging.

Most of the Manawatu wader flock left at the end of March, but a few odd birds have stayed on, including a Sharp-tailed and two Pectoral Sandpipers into May. A Little Tern has also been present into May, and diligent searching of the White-fronted Tern flock has produced yet another White-winged Black Tern (the fourth of the summer) and an Arctic Tern - the latter unfortunately a one day bird, on 2 April.

The regular influx of Grey Teal in March/April once again included a Chestnut Teal, first seen on 9 March and staying through until the beginning of May at least. It is presumed to be an immature drake. A Pied Shag was quite unusual for Foxton, and the first day of duck shooting brought a good total of 70 Royal Spoonbills.

Band reports sent in have provided information on banding sites and age of some of our birds. Caspian Terns banded in Invercargill and Nelson frequent the coastal beaches. Wrybills banded in the Mackenzie Country have passed through in February, and one regular visitor banded on the West Coast six years ago remains resident. Spoonbill band sightings have been sent in with preliminary information indicating that the birds come from Wairau Lagoons near Blenheim and the Dunedin area.

Away from the estuary there have been two reports of a NZ Falcon in Palmerston North in the first week of May - apparently two different individuals. A single Cattle Egret at Ohakea on 29 April is the only report of the species so far, and an amazing number of 85 NZ Dabchicks were at Marton sewage works on 1 May.

(Ian Saville)

Wairarapa

We have been lucky to have some great guest speakers to match our summer weather. In February Glen Holland from Mt Bruce gave a marvellous talk on his trip to Codfish Island. Glen had previously given us a talk on birds of South Africa, where he demonstrated his observational skills and his ability to mimic their song. This latest talk was every bit as good. His trip was mostly concerned with observations and capture of Kaka.

The continuation of our crop damage study saw us at the Waipipi vineyard on the outskirts of Masterton. Our guest speaker was Nick Porter from Crop Research in Hawkes Bay. He gave us a thorough talk on bird control methods, crop damage evaluation and collecting damage data. It became apparent how complicated assessing damage, the species causing it and the quick learning of birds to counteract control and protection methods are. Several of our members had blank looks on their faces when Nick described how to select bunches of grapes to assess bird damage. Selected rows, vines, grape bunches all marked and selected using random tables, which is a long way from looking through a pair of binoculars.

Our third guest speaker for the period was Jo Beetham, an ostrich farmer from east of Masterton. This was a fascinating topic on a bird few of us knew much about. Farming these birds is obviously not that easy. They are costly to rear, and when fully grown care has to be taken because of their size and agility.

(Miles King)

Canterbury

February's evening meeting was members' night, with a nice collection of slides from various people, plus some very challenging and fun quizzes. March was the local AGM, seeing Nick Allen become the new RR-in-waiting. Nick will be taking over from Ron Nilsson who has been doing a splendid job not only of running the local branch, finding great speakers and good field trips, but also coordinating the organisation of the 60th Annual General Meeting and Conference.

Local members were then treated to a great talk on the birds and wildlife of Israel by Nitzan and Varda Zorkay. Most people, when they think of Israel think desert. The Zorkays proved that this small country was anything but, with a diverse patchwork of many different habitats, with the area around the Mediterranean coast being very green. In this area near Tel Aviv there are many fish ponds, the winter habitat for wildfowl and waders, including the Pygmy Cormorant, making a comeback from past hunting.

The area of Israel adjacent to the Red sea is now a popular birding spot. At spring migration time, around April, the fields come alive with passerines exhausted after crossing the Sahara Desert. Thousands of raptors are funnelled through Israel, where species such as Honey and Common Buzzards, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Golden Eagle, Imperial Eagle and Short-toed Eagle are counted by a line of observers set up across the country. Resident raptors include the Lappet-faced Vulture, one of the largest vultures, recovering, through management, from near extinction in Israel. They are once again dominant at carrion over resident Griffon and Egyptian Vultures.

In April Nicolette Was shared some results of her research into the normally unobserved private lives of Broad-billed Prions, revealing how the prion's burrow use behaviour (and tendency to evict and/or kill Chatham Petrel chicks) impacts on the endangered petrel population on Rangatira Island in the Chathams group.

A very successful twitchathon, picnic and wader watch ended at the Ashley Estuary in February with around 20 participants. The first bird seen was a Little Owl (at 5.45 am - the early birder gets the owl). Nick Allen managed to find an especially high number of species (54, excluding such things as Red Junglefowl and Wild Turkey), which is good news for all as he was helping to organise the forthcoming AGM field trips. At the picnic lunch prizes were awarded for achievements such as the highest list, rarest bird (Cattle Egret), largest bird (Ostrich), furthest distance travelled (USA), whitest bird seen, most colourful bird etc. Somehow everybody seemed to win something.

After lunch the group waded through the mud of the Ashley Estuary finding gulls and terns, including about a hundred White-fronted Terns, a couple of Caspian terns, some Black-billed Gulls, SIPO and two hybrid oystercatchers still with their SIPO/VOC parents. Further on towards Saltwater Creek Pied Stilts, Bar-tailed Godwits (some in their lovely rusty breeding attire), Lesser Knots and two Far-eastern Curlews were seen, topping off a lovely day.

March saw the annual "Farewell to the Waders" at Lake Ellesmere. About 15 members came along, including a visiting American lecturer, to enjoy the fine weather and views of 27 Red-necked Stints coming into breeding plumage, three Curlew Sandpipers, four Black-fronted Terns, 115 Wrybills (quite a lot for so late in the season), a knot, a few Bar-tailed Godwits and a NZ Pipit (coming down from the hills for winter). Colin Hill generously offered a picnic spot on his farm afterwards.

A successful trip to Arthurs Pass to scout for good bush birds for the AGM field trip was made in April, and included NZ Robins, Tomtits and Riflemen. Along the way a pair of Southern Crested Grebes with two large offspring were spotted on Lake Pearson, with lots of Bellbirds singing and flying around in the shrubs surrounding the lake.

Waikuku Beach and the surrounding Taranaki Creek paddocks have been good bird spotting, with a Glossy Ibis and two Cattle Egrets reported from early May. There have been Cattle Egrets for much of the year a few kilometres away, rising to 18 birds in April, and a Glossy Ibis reported at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, so these are possibly not new arrivals. One Saturday afternoon, in addition to the ibis, there were large numbers of Red-billed, Black-backed and Black-billed Gulls (including many banded immatures), stilts, SIPO, Spur-winged Plovers, a godwit, Pukeko, Black Swans, Paradise Shelducks, White-faced Herons and passerines seen. Nine Mute Swans (a pair with their seven cygnets) flew past, landing on the creek among flocks of Mallards, Grey Teal, Shovelers and NZ Scaup. Little Shags were seen congregating at last year's colony site.

Registrations for the AGM and conference reached around 120 for an excellent scientific day and the weather cooperated beautifully, ending a line-up of jinxed field trips in recent years, along with a minimum of seismic activity.

(Frances Schmechel/Nick Allen)

Otago

Flocks of Turnstones! Golden plovers in all stages of breeding plumage. A group of five had a happy time during a weekend in Invercargill seeing more birds than we might have thought possible. On arrival at Lloyd Esler's house in Otatara there was still enough light to look for Fernbirds (seen, but not heard). The next day Lloyd showed us where the wader roost is at high tide in Awarua Bay. This enormous inlet off Bluff Harbour has an impressive list and did not disappoint us. 36 Pacific Golden Plovers, 31 Red-necked Stints and hundreds of Turnstones were highlights - rather more than turn up at Aramoana. Two species were represented by single individuals - a busy, running Terek Sandpiper and a majestic Eastern Curlew.

We then completed a complicated manoeuvre dropping people off at various points in order to complete a patrol of Oreti Beach. Most Otago-ites were happy to leave the identifications to Lloyd, and we brought back two sacks of bodies. We could see why Southland had such a high ratio to distance walked.

On Sunday morning we explored Waituna Lagoon, to the east of Awarua Bay. While waders were fewer in number, we saw a flock of 20 spoonbills both in the air and on the mud. After lunch we headed to Bluff, where from the oceanside walking track we were treated to a spectacular flyby of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters with good numbers of Shy and Buller's Mollmawks. We looped back to the van via a short bush walk, with various passerines. By the time we returned to Dunedin we'd seen some 55 species.

A Town Belt field trip in February resulted in sightings of many species. Bellbirds were heard, and a Tui and Silvereyes seen. There were many NZ Pigeons and a flock of Brown Creepers near Braid Road. Other birds included many introduced passerines and gulls.

The reserve at the top of Mt Cargill had flowered well during the exceptionally warm summer and most plants were weighed down with fruit and seed. Fernbirds showed up as promised on a field trip in March - they sang, scrambled through bushes beside us, ran across the path and flew. Other birds were Bellbirds singing everywhere, Fantails (one black), Silvereyes, Grey Warblers, Dunnocks and Redpolls. Interesting plants held food for birds everywhere.

The Royal Spoonbill census on Waitangi Day produced numbers well down on last year - 225 versus 321 for 1998. The likely explanation was an early breeding season, at least for Maukiekie and Green Island.

Banded birds recovered this year include a Blue Penguin at Karitane, banded in November 1995 in Oamaru, a road-killed Silvereye, two Black-billed Gulls at Papanui Inlet, banded in Southland, and a large number of banded spoonbills, some of them from the Wairau Lagoons near Blenheim. A real gem was the Pied Stilt at Anderson's Lagoon, North Otago, banded as a chick at Hoopers Inlet on 6 January 1993.

Martin Renner reported 27 species on a pelagic trip on the RV *Munida* in March, reaching 26 km ESE of Cape Saunders. The more unusual species were seen mostly at the furthest point, and included Black-bellied Storm Petrel (3), Broad-billed Prion (1), a possible Thin-billed Prion (1), Mottled Petrel (10) and diving petrel. Hamish Spencer also had a trip on the *Munida* in February, but the voyage was closer to shore. The common species were similar, although there were also plenty of Hutton's Shearwaters and a single Mottled Petrel. Martin also reported there were many sharks.

(Louise Foord/Hamish Spencer)

Southland

In January Lloyd Esler and Michael Forrest from the Southland Museum went on a DoC trip up to Takahe Valley and Lake Orbell in Fiordland. It was a bit of a grunt getting up there - three hours more or less straight up through beech forest and on a very hot day, but well worth the effort. Birds seen were Bellbird, Brown Creeper, Fantail, Rifleman, Yellowhead, Tomtit, NZ Pigeon, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chaffinch, Redpoll, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer, Blackbird, Song Thrush and, of course, Takahe. At least three different birds were seen several times close to the lake shore, and it was great to see them in their natural habitat. One member of the party was attacked by an irate Takahe, which raises an ethical question - to what extent can you defend yourself against an enraged but endangered bird? We called in at the ancient Maori rock shelter and the Aurora Cave on the way down.

I was fortunate to visit the islands of the subantarctic with Heritage Expeditions in February. We went from Bluff to Campbell Island, then to Auckland Island and Enderby Island with days ashore and a close inspection of the Snares from inflatable boats on the return. The weather was calm and mild with little wind and rain.

Birds seen were: Royal Albatross - frequent at sea from south of the Snares, large numbers nesting on Campbell Island and a few nests on Enderby. Wandering Albatross - fairly frequent at sea south of the Snares, and several on nests on South-west Cape. White-capped Mollymawk - common at sea, large nesting colony on South-west Cape. Salvin's Mollymawk - frequent south of Stewart Island. Black-browed Mollymawk - common at sea Campbell to Auckland Islands. Grey-headed Mollymawk - several seen around Campbell Island. Buller's Mollymawk - common Foveaux Strait to Snares, nesting on cliffs around Snares. Light-mantled Sooty Albatross - several at sea south of Snares, circling cliffs on Campbell and Auckland Islands and nesting on Enderby. Giant petrel spp. - common at sea south of Stewart Island, nesting on Enderby. Buller's Shearwater - two seen off Snares. Sooty Shearwater - abundant Foveaux Strait to Auckland Island. Little Shearwater - four off Auckland Island. Diving petrel - abundant Foveaux Strait to Snares. White-chinned Petrel - frequent south of Stewart Island. Grey Petrel - one off Snares. Cape Pigeon - abundant Foveaux Strait south, the only seabird that followed the ship. Prion spp. - common Foveaux Strait to Auckland Island. Mottled Petrel - quite common throughout. Several small gadfly petrels (Cook's?) which we couldn't identify. Wilson's Storm Petrel - several around Campbell Island. Black-bellied Storm

Petrel - common south of Auckland Island. King Penguin - three ashore at Campbell Island. Yellow-eyed Penguin - one on Campbell Island and common in Carnley Harbour and on Enderby. Snares Crested Penguin - abundant at Snares on land and at sea. Stewart Island Shag - several in Foveaux Strait. Campbell Island Shag - common around Campbell Island. Auckland Island Shag - common at Auckland Island and Enderby. Auckland Island Teal - a few on Enderby. Auckland Island Banded Dotterel - common on Enderby. Brown Skua - common around all islands and a few seen at sea. Black-backed Gull - a few on Campbell, Auckland and Enderby. Red-billed Gull - a few on all islands. White-fronted Tern - about 200 on Enderby. Antarctic Tern - fairly common around all of the islands. Yellow-crowned Parakeet - a few on Enderby. Red-crowned Parakeet - common on Enderby. Silveryeye - common on Campbell Island and a few on Enderby. NZ Pipit - common on Auckland and Enderby. Fernbird - several seen on Snares. Auckland Island Tomtit - quite common on Enderby. Bellbird - conspicuous on Enderby. Redpoll - commonest bird on Campbell Island, also seen on Auckland and Enderby.

A wet spring followed by summer drought resulted in low water levels and mixed fortunes for the birds. Breeding waterbirds started out well, but large concentrations of waterfowl at estuaries in February included over 1000 Paradise Shelducks at Waituna, along with large flocks of Grey Teal, Canada Geese, Black Swans and Mallards.

A trio of SIPOs at Riverslea were reported by Bruce Newland. After trying unsuccessfully last season, they raised four chicks from one nest near a woolshed. Being a holding paddock meant inevitable stock pressure, but teamwork paid off with two birds flying at the offending sheep while the third bird held the nest.

Recent sightings have included two freshly dead Little Shearwaters on Oreti Beach in March, an albino Starling in Balclutha and albino Spur-winged Plover in February at Fortrose, a yellow Bellbird at Dolamore Park, and an Oriental Cuckoo at West Dipton on 30 April (we had one resident in Queen's Park last year for several weeks).

John Dowding reports that there are now 150 of the southern subspecies of NZ Dotterels. This is a dramatic increase from 108 last year and is double the number alive since cat control began in earnest in 1995. Wynston Cooper reports 28 eggs in his 41 sample burrows of Cook's Petrel on Codfish Island, from which 25 chicks fledged - a good score.

The 5th annual beach patrol along Mason Bay, Stewart Island, took place in May. There is usually high mortality

of Sooty Shearwater chicks, which could mean either that large numbers of stranded chicks indicates large numbers of survivors as well, or that it is a bad sign as fewer than usual survived. This year's party of eight included Frank Austin from Dunedin and a visitor from the US. There was good kiwi spotting at night, and we followed a kiwi by day for 10 minutes as he worked his way along a track ahead of us. 55 New Zealand Dotterels were at the mouth of Duck Creek, none of which appeared to be banded. Also present were four Black Oystercatchers, one of which was fully pied - almost (but not quite) enough reason to start calling them Variable Oystercatchers. The beach patrol netted 339 Sooty Shearwaters, 15 Mottled Petrels, seven Broad-billed Prions, three Fairy Prions, two Black-backed Gulls, a Pied Shag and a Shy Mollymawk.

What's On



Far North

Beach patrols - 90 Mile Beach, monthly. Ph. John Dawn (09) 407 8658 or Isobella Godbert (09) 407 8058.

3-4 July - Far North wader census. Ph. Leigh Honnor (09)

17 or 18 July - tree planting, Motukawanui Island. Ph. Leigh Honnor.

10 August - evening meeting, DoC office, Kerikeri. Kokako in Puketi Forest. Ph. Leigh Honnor.

Northland

8 July - evening meeting, David Crockett Room, Education Centre, Alexander Street. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

3-4 July - Far North harbours census. Ph. Leigh Honnor/Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

12 August - evening meeting.

14 August - working bee on harbour shellbanks. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

9 September - evening meeting.

14 October - evening meeting.

Monthly beach patrols of Dargaville beaches (Prue Cozens (09) 437 0127), 90 Mile Beach and Karikari (Isobella 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 meeting, Kohia Teachers' Centre, College of Education. Kiwi chicks. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.



South Auckland

13 July - evening meeting, beach wreck identification. Papakura Croquet Clubrooms, Chapel Street. Ph. David Lawrie (09) 238 8407.

Monthly beach patrols, Kariotahi and Sunset Beaches. Ph. Rob Wheeler (09) 299 7069.



Waikato

Evening meetings, third Wednesday of the month (except January), DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751 for all activities.

3 July - west coast harbours winter census.

11 July, 8 August, 12 September, 10 October, 14 November - Hamilton lakes census.

21 July - evening meeting, Raoul Island.

18 August - evening meeting, wader migration and counting.

22 August - Cattle Egret census.

15 September - evening meeting, our coastal environment.

18/19 September - field trip to Rangitoto Ranges.

17 October - spring migration day, Miranda Shorebird Centre.

Late July - August - adult Grey-faced Petrel banding.

Monthly beach patrols of west coast beaches and Mt Karioi 5 minute counts. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891

Hamilton and Forest Lake monthly counts - Ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729. Dates are 11 April, 9 May, 13 June, 11 July.

Bay of Plenty



Volcanic Plateau

6 September - evening meeting Turangi. Ph Kerry Oates (06) 385 9505.

6 December - evening meeting Rotorua.

Hawkes Bay

17 July - Pakowhai Country Park. Ph Christine McRae for all event (06) 879 9136.

15 August - Lake Hurimoana.

19 September - river venue - to be announced.

Labour Weekend - Lake Waikaremoana.

Taranaki

6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 5 October, 2 November, 7 December - evening

meetings, Taranaki Museum, Arioki Street, New Plymouth. Ph. David Medway (06) 758 0370.

Wanganui

Manawatu

14 July - evening meeting, Greytown. Ph des and Barbara Lovatt, 4 Clara Anne Grove.

1 August - field trip to Fensham Estate, Carterton. Ph Miles King (06) 377 5252.

Wairarapa

- evening meeting, Red Cross Rooms Masterton. Ph. Miles King (06) 377 5252.

Wellington

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Harbour survey, 2nd Sunday of the month, 1-3 pm. Ph. Ros Batcheler (04) 479 4095 or Reg Cotter (04) 568 6960.

Canterbury

10 or 11 July - Ashburton Lakes count. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 338 8936, Donald Geddes (03) 308 6489.

26 July - evening meeting, Science Alive Building, Moorhouse Ave. Snares Islands. Ph. Nick Allen (03) 312 7183.

14 or 15 August - pelagic trip Kaikoura. Ph. Nick Allen (03) 312 7183 or Tony Crocker (03) 313 4995.

30 August - evening meeting, South Africa and Broome.

Otago

25 August - evening meeting, Otago Art Society building. Birds in the DoC Otago region. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041.

27 October - evening meeting, wetland birds in Namibia.

21 November - summer wadercount. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

Southland

24-26 September - Mason Bay trip, Stewart Island. Ph. Lloyd Elser (03) 213 0404.

Nominations for Regional Representatives 2000

Each region of the Society shall have a Regional Representative who will be an Officer of the Society and as such is responsible to the Council for the management of the region. Each RR shall serve for one year (from 1 January 2000) and is eligible for re-election.

Nominations for the Regional Representative of each region of the Society will close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 1999. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must be a financial member of the Society.

If more than one valid nomination is received by the Secretary a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2000 year.

CHRISTINE REED
Secretary

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