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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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Talking Penguins

Every year, in Dunedin, the Yellow-eyed Penguin Consultative Group, a coalition of central government, conservation associates and land-owners, sponsors a one-day public symposium on Yellow-eyed Penguin (YEP) research and conservation. The symposium held on Saturday 1 August this year was the tenth in the series.

Participants converge on these gatherings from all parts of the YEP's mainland range (Canterbury to Southland). Researchers, conservation managers (both amateur and professional), commercial operators, and penguin-savvy members of the public keep in touch with others' habitat restoration projects, science, protection measures, tourism, and the lives of colleagues in the highly motivated penguin-minding community.

Typically, symposia have two components. First, participants who choose to do so present short summaries of their YEP research or protection projects. These have been valuable opportunities to ask for advice on problems or describe how difficulties have been overcome. More often than not, they provide interesting insights to managing the human dimensions of YEP conservation. Second, a YEP conservation theme is explored, usually with the help of an invited speaker. Themes have been as divergent as local authority planning mechanisms and YEP foraging behaviour, to speculating on the future of YEP conservation. This year, we took a glimpse into the very distant past of New Zealand's penguins.

Penguin evolution

Dr Ewan Fordyce of Otago University's Geology Department summarised current wisdom on the evolution of New Zealand's extant

penguin species, speculating also on the kinds of landscapes their predecessors might have inhabited. For anyone with a taste for paleontological investigations, this is fascinating country: it is simply astonishing to see how the physiology and behaviour of animals is deduced from fossilised skeletal fragments.

Ewan's journey into the penguin past traversed a 40 million year history of crises and upheavals in New Zealand's geological history. Since New Zealand's oldest recorded penguin - a fossilised proto penguin - was discovered in North Canterbury, coastlines and climates have advanced and receded markedly. Much of the evidence needed to fill the gaps in subsequent penguin history undoubtedly lies out of reach in marine sediments on the continental shelf.

Popular notions of giant penguins dominating ancient North Canterbury beachscapes are a little exaggerated. Even so, at 55 kilos (more or less), the sleek, long-billed ancestors of Emperor Penguin size which came ashore here 30 million years ago would clearly have been awkward banding propositions. Size does not appear to have changed much at the other end of the penguin scale, however: what are taken to be the ancestors of Blue Penguins have been found as comparably-sized 25 million-year-old fossils in Hakataramea limestone.

Little is known of penguin evolution between 20 to 10 million years ago, but 5 million years ago, Adelie, King and Emperor Penguins lineages were established in New Zealand waters. The origins of YEPs are enigmatic. They are not related directly to any one of these lineages, but molecular similarities suggest divergence from the crested penguins.

Present-day YEPs

With regret, John Darby has concluded his long-running YEP study on Otago Peninsula, where the penguins now breed in their largest mainland aggregations. He, and numerous other volunteer observers, have left an invaluable record of YEP fortunes on the South Island coast since 1981.

A generally favourable trajectory in numbers is apparent. Known breeding pair numbers, seasoned with a prudent degree of estimation, have risen from just fewer than 500 pairs in 1981/82 to a high of 631 in 1996/97. This upward trend, actively encouraged by predator control and habitat restoration, is remarkable for its steep descent into and recovery from a catastrophic slump in the early 1990s. In a series of dismayingly mortality events thought to have been precipitated by food shortages at sea, numbers fell to just 150 pairs in 1990/91. These events were extremely costly to YEPs: not only were eggs and nestlings lost to the effects of starvation and disease, but breeding adults attempting to raise young also perished from the effort. YEPs are particularly at risk because they routinely attempt to raise two chicks.

The cause of these food failures is unknown, but today their probable occurrence can be predicted when sea surface temperatures rise anomalously in the preceding winter. To preserve breeding adults from loss in these tough seasons, YEP managers and researchers in Otago considered reduction of clutch and brood sizes. (In really calamitous years, the taking of all eggs was considered in order to preserve experienced breeding adults.) Though politically unpalatable, these measures were and its subscription payments,

rescue programmes favoured by public reaction to news of starvation. Sadly, however, virtually no young birds appear to have survived from previous large-scale salvage and rehabilitation attempts.

Clutch and brood reduction proved problematic for several reasons. Sometimes, the indications of a poor season were equivocal; or, a sudden improvement might follow a disastrous start. Managers needed more certainty before taking the critical decisions to intervene. Researchers held differing opinions about its benefits. At Otago University, Kerry-Anne Edge's study has indicated that swapping eggs and chicks to leave each pair with just one chick to raise might not materially reduce parenting effort: the adults could invest in one chick nearly as much effort as they do in two. As John Darby suggests, however, a single chick might go to sea earlier, perhaps at a higher fledging weight, allowing parent birds to enter the perilous moult phase with more days to spare. Each of these possibilities awaits another disastrous season before they can be tested adequately in the field.

YEP census

YEP numbers and distribution on the north coast of Stewart Island will be surveyed comprehensively in November this year. The Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust is funding and supervising the survey, the first in a proposed series intended to provide accurate baseline data on penguin conservation status. The forest habitat on these coasts will make searching very difficult. For this reason, this summer's survey will be treated as a pilot, to test methodology and quantify search effort.

Further YEP symposia

If you would like to be notified about future YEP symposia, contact Bruce McKinlay, or the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust:

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EUAN KENNEDY

Blue Penguin symposium, Oamaru

This full day meeting was the second biennial penguin meeting to be held in Oamaru, which has become a significant centre for penguin related activity since the establishment of the Oamaru Blue Penguin colony in 1993. The development of the colony is closely related to the expansion of the local penguin population and associated biological research.

In September 1997 the first symposium was held to consider the progress of the colony, biologically and as a tourism venture, and, importantly, upon their interaction. The success of that meeting encouraged the Oamaru Blue Penguin Committee to establish an additional role for its monitoring and welfare committee of arranging what will be a biennial event for Oamaru.

The meeting attracted speakers in the field of penguin biology and ecology, from staff and post-graduate students from the Universities of Otago, Victoria and Massey, and various parts of the Department of Conservation.

Professor Ewan Fordyce, Geology Department of the University of Otago, who is well known for his studies of fossil whales and penguins, spoke on the origins of penguins, the oldest known relative dating back about 55 million years, having been unearthed in the Waitaki Valley. Dr Chris Lalas discussed the food of penguins, his research pointing to the importance of the dominance of small sprats in Blue Penguins' diet, and the consequent vulnerability of the birds when the fish biology was disrupted by adverse weather conditions, such as El Nino and La Nina, providing alteration of sea temperatures. North Otago is particularly affected because of the very specific current patterns off its coast.

A string of speakers from Oamaru, Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington then provided accounts of their own populations in a comparative series. Not all penguins are equal, and there are quite major differences in breeding habits and success between the populations.

Finally in the afternoon, three speakers described predation stresses and causes of death and disease in penguin populations from Banks Peninsula, Oamaru and Australia, where the Blue Penguin is known as the Little or Fairy Penguin, well known from the Phillip Island tourist attraction "Penguin Parade".

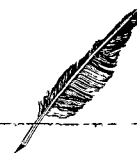
The meeting was well subscribed, with over 70 registrants and nearly 30

seats at the conference dinner. Registrants came from Hamilton to Otago, drawn from universities, DoC, interested organisations such as the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, various tourism ventures, Forest and Bird, OSNZ and individual naturalists. All agreed that the meeting was an unqualified success in terms of knowledge of the birds, their interaction with man, predation and climate. The only expressed regret was that there was insufficient time to say all the things that needed to be said.

The success of the day was due in no small part to the organisation, hospitality and compliant conference facilities provided by the staff at the Quality Hotel Brydone. The symposium committee is grateful to several local bodies, service groups and businesses of the Oamaru community who have supported this symposium. The next symposium will be held in 2001.

TONY HOCKEN

From the President's Desk



At the end of July I received the Proceedings from the 22nd International Ornithological Congress held in Durban during August last year. Totalling some 3,600 pages it arrived in a small envelope - the first IOC Proceedings to be delivered on a CD-Rom. Apart from a flaw in the search engine which won't automatically find contributed papers, this is a major achievement on behalf of the organisers in South Africa. I am sure the national rivalry between our two countries on the sports field has had something to do with their efforts to match achievements from the 20th Congress. It also means that the three southern hemisphere Congresses during the past 25 years have provided a challenge to the more traditional ornithology and systems of the northern hemisphere while providing a new perspective on ornithology in areas of the world where bird study is in its developmental stages.

There is much change going on in the world of birds, ranging from environmental and habitat change to a reconsideration of the species concepts by which we determine how to classify the taxa that we see. New techniques should not, however, blind us to the importance of recording what we see, especially when records in a society such

as ours, can be accumulated over long periods of time.

Having celebrated the first 60 years of the Society this year, we embark on our journey into the next millennium with two schemes which will enable the Society to fulfil its role as a compiler of information which reflects the status of birds in New Zealand.

I recall early in my presidency challenging members to find me ten endemic land birds which were increasing in numbers. The list struggled to about seven with some species only showing signs of local population increase, but generally as one gets older the view of birds once common seems to diminish both in impression and recorded fact. One of the areas where there is the greatest lack of information is our knowledge of habitat use for species, and even a clear record of what their food requirements might be.

There is continuing argument over whether we should be removing exotic vegetation and replacing it with endemics in order to foster native birds. Conversely, species such as Tui and NZ Pigeon seem to be benefiting from increasing numbers of introduced nectar and fruiting plants, providing food in urban areas, where both seem to be making a comeback in some parts of the country.

The Society will commence a new **Atlas Scheme** in December 1999 to run for a period of five years. This scheme will depend largely on the resources of Society members, though Council is still hopeful that other associated parties will participate throughout the project. The new atlas will concentrate on recording only the distribution of birds in relation to habitat, and will not record numbers. Each 10,000m square in the country will need to be visited at least once in each season during the five year project (a minimum of four visits per square during the term of the project).

There will be regular maps showing survey coverage published in *OSNZ News* so that you can plan to undertake expeditions into the more remote parts of the countryside. For the next five years the AGM and Conference of the OSNZ will be held in some unusual places (see the minutes of the AGM) to ensure that members can see more of the country and contribute extra material for the atlas.

The other new project will be the **National Monitoring Scheme**. It has become increasingly clear to members who have been monitoring or studying populations and areas for long periods of time that there is a continuing pattern of change. Existing schemes like the Beach Patrol and the periodic wader

counts are increasingly being used as databases recording such changes. Most regions have a variety of local schemes and individual studies which contain data collected over a period of time. The intention is to slowly develop a national network of sites and studies which maintain a regular record of visits and changes. This not only broadens the range of bird study which members can participate in, but hopefully means that a range of ornithological study can be undertaken within any field excursion.

Each region will be looking in coming months for some 8-10 permanent sites or locations with a range of habitat types (and hopefully including existing long term study areas) which will be monitored regularly in the future. Apart from the basic seasonal details of species, numbers, breeding and behavioural activity, we need to develop data on feeding habits and habitat use. It is further hoped that other organisations will participate (such as Fish & Game) with a set of standard monitoring sites of their own in the network which will enable us to provide explanations for the broad distributional changes which may become evident from the Atlas scheme.

This project also provides an avenue for every member to contribute to such national data collection, and provide a chain of specific birding sites throughout the country where people may study the changing birding patterns or differing habitat and seasonal use.

But enough of the serious world of birds! I note that the RRs are proposing to organise you into a national competing 'Twitchathon' in October. The benefit in this case is that it will also be related to an international event which through sponsorship will help to benefit the activities of Birdlife International (formerly ICBP).

This is an opportunity to have fun, look for a wide range of species and help world conservation at the same time. In a country which thrives on competition, I hope that this will develop in future years to include people who are not OSNZ members. How many of your local school science classes can be challenged to compete? How many teams will we have where an OSNZ member has a team of accompanying non-members? See how many you can persuade to become members. As President I will be delighted to award an additional (liquid) prize to the first team to submit a list to the organisers containing 50 or more taxa seen, within the terms of the competition (organisers please note). I hope also that all lists and routes will be kept as a national archive, because even a Twitchathon done on a regular basis provides a cross section and status report on our avifauna.

On 22 August I was privileged to join with some 500 others at Kerikeri to celebrate the life of one of our more interesting ornithologists. In mid-June Gerry Clark and crewman Roger Sale went missing in the yacht *Totorore* while supporting a team of researchers visiting the Antipodes Islands. Having retired as a master mariner, Gerry developed a yen for small yachts, built by himself, and a gentle obsession with seabirds and the fragility of the marine environment.

His exploits, first in the *Katega* and then *Totorore*, make hair-raising listening and reading, even for the most intrepid mariners. I remember telling him when he was writing the *Voyage of the Totorore* that it could be better called *Somersaulting round the Subantarctic*, so many times had he managed to rotate his yacht in unusual and abnormal directions. Gerry set out to encourage people to take notice of what is going on far from land in the wilds of the southern oceans - and broadened our ornithological and adventurous knowledge immensely. He was determinedly passionate about what he wanted to do and achieve. The numbers present at Kerikeri demonstrated the support for his lifelong achievements.

My most enduring memory of Gerry was a long way from the places that he loved, when he had me paged in the distinguished precincts of the Natural History Museum in New York. On a freezing January day, fresh off the plane from New Zealand summer and *Totorore* at the Chatham Islands, there was Gerry looking like a bear, dressed in an ankle length fur coat loaned courtesy of his host and the New York Yacht Club.

He was there to receive the most distinguished sailing award in the world - the Blue Water Medal of the Cruising Club of America. Some days later we shared a reception at the NZ embassy in Washington, before both fulfilling speaking arrangements on consecutive days. Birds of New Zealand, seabirds and adventure got a good airing to packed audiences courtesy of the Smithsonian and the US National Zoo.

There is no real knowledge of what happened back in June, and only small pieces of wreckage were found. We can be assured, however, that Gerry was in his element and where he wanted to be with the sea and birds he enjoyed so much. We would do well to emulate the determination to succeed and accept challenges, epitomised in the life of Gerry Clark, MBE, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, master mariner, adventurer, ornithologist and gentle friend.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

MINUTES OF THE 60th AGM OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

Saturday 5 June 1999,
Copper Top Room, Canterbury
University, Ilam, Christchurch.

Commenced at 8.20 pm with
78 members present

Apologies: Peter Schweigman, Bill Cash, Kerry Oates, Gwenda Pulham, Kathy Barrow, Geoff Foreman, Tom Teasdale, Lorna Simpkin, Betty Seddon, Shirley Nieuwland, Ian Reid, Stella and John Rowe, Alison and Stuart Chambers, Bryan Woolley, Anthea Goodwin, Russell Thomas, Sheila Petch, Pauline Jenkins, Christine McRae, Jim Hamilton, Bell family, Colin Ogle.

(Wright/Crockett) Carried.

Meeting stood for a minute's silence in honour of members recently passed away: Folkert Nieuwland, Frank Newcombe, Betty Binning, Pat Crombie, Bob Roach.

Previous minutes

Confirmation of minutes as published in September 1998 *OSNZ News* for 59th AGM.

Moved that minutes of 1998 AGM be taken as read

(CJRobertson/KJWilson) Carried
There were no matters arising

Council reports

President's report was previously circulated. Some additions were made which covered events in the first 6 months of 1999, especially Council and RR meetings of the past 2 days. Peter Schweigman has been co-opted for the balance of a one year term following the resignation of D. Onley.

The President expressed thanks to retiring RRs on behalf of the Society. Best wishes were given to new RRs and a thank you for their contributions in advance. These joint meetings have been developed before the AGM and scientific day, so that all regions can speak directly to council, and have their views heard, and so that RR's can have direct input into national decision making.

The Christchurch local committee were complemented on a successful science day (applauded). The work displayed represented Society programmes past and present, and previewed future activities.

The *Notornis* March issue was sent out just before the AGM, following problems with binding. This was a special wader issue in memory of Sibson and Heather, which again demonstrates the balance between national composite and individual studies. Additional copies may be purchased for NZ\$20 or US\$20 for overseas orders from the Membership Secretary, P O Box 316, Drury, South Auckland.

The departure of editor Gábor Lövei was not anticipated. The Society thanks Paul Sagar for taking over the job and welcomes the new editor Richard Holdaway. *OSNZ News* continues to grow, but awaits a new name. The President's offer of a prize for a suitable name from members is still on the table. The September Council meeting will make a decision on the new name. There is a need for more illustrations of members' activities – an issue which also came up in the review of publications. Photos of members' activities should be sent to the Editor, *OSNZ News*.

The Society is to proceed with development of an internet website by 2000. Members able to assist with ideas or materials should contact the President.

The junior/adult training course is now to be called "Training Courses for Ornithologists": the first is to be held at Farewell Spit in 2000. Members should book now with the Nelson-RR. A Southland course will be held in January 2001.

A ten year index for Vols 51-60 of *Notornis* will be prepared for publication in 2000.

The Rare Birds Committee has been reconstituted and will undertake a revision of their role, while clearing the backlog of accumulated material.

Paintings which formed the illustrations in the new field guide will be offered for sale by auction through Webb Galleries in December 1999. Catalogues and bidding form will be sent to members in the September mailout.

The Society will offer an annual student study report writing prize, advertised in September to a specific format for delivery by 10 April. Winners will be announced at the AGM. A "Student Corner" in *Notornis* will publish these reports. It is hoped that universities will support this initiative.

A national twitchathon will be organised in October by RRs, to coincide with the international "bird race" which returns funding from sponsors to Birdlife International.

Displays about the Society at

Miranda and Twizel are to be reviewed. Poster displays which will enable a wider distribution are to be investigated.

A national Royal Spoonbill count will be held in June 2000. The coordinator will be Peter Schweigman.

Two significant schemes will be introduced for the Society, and they will start later this year. A National Monitoring Scheme will allow continuous monitoring of a set of habitat sites selected for each region. Some habitats already being monitored can be included. The scheme will start slowly. It is to be done in addition to other Society activities, consolidating existing projects, and the scheme will expand from 2000 onward. A new Atlas Scheme for 5 years commencing Dec 1999 will be implemented, although it will not be of the same level of intensity as the previous scheme. Members will be encouraged to visit each square over a 3 month period to record species breeding' and habitat but not their numbers. The National Monitoring Scheme will tie to the Atlas Scheme, the latter showing up the broad distribution of each bird species. The former will help explain changes.

The Atlas Scheme and AGM locations will be aligned for the next 5 years. Venues for 2000: Napier, and proposed 2001: BoP/Volcanic Plateau, 2002: Hokitika, 2003: Wanganui/Taranaki, 2004: (Central) Otago, 2005: Gisborne. Assistance will probably be needed from surrounding regions. The structure of the AGM weekend will be different – a Saturday field trip will be run in association with the Atlas Scheme. The AGM will then be held Saturday evening. A Sunday scientific day and annual dinner follows. Monday will be an active field day for more atlasing.

The President's report was opened for discussion: none generated.
Carried

Finance

M. Nee indicated a probable rise in membership fees for 2001. Membership is currently about 1,000 and slightly increasing. All possible sources of funding for the major schemes such as the atlas are being actively investigated. Some data collected by the Society is already being sold to willing buyers.

Moved finance report be accepted
(Dean/Challies) Carried.

Awards

K-J Wilson presented the AT Edgar junior award. Awarded to Jamie Wood.

New awards this year – Meritorious Service Awards – service in furthering the objects of the Society. David Crockett announced and presented the awards - to Hazel Harty and Dick Veitch (in absentia).

The President announced a Falla Memorial Award to Hugh Robertson (in absentia) for later presentation at a Wellington regional meeting.

The President announced two new Fellows of the Ornithological Society of NZ, the highest honour of the Society – Presentations made to John Warham and Brian Bell.

General business

Colin Hill asked about the timing of the annual meeting. The financial year ends 31 Dec, accounts need to be audited and then delivered to members before the AGM. The matter remains under review while school holidays remain variable.

Frances Schmechel asked that Tony Crocker be given a vote of thanks for work on *OSNZ News*. Applauded.

Graeme Taylor thanked the organising committee for the Annual Conference and AGM. Applauded.

M. Nee moved thanks to the President for his running of the AGM. Applauded.

60th annual general meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

CHRISTINE REED
Hon. Secretary

60th Anniversary AGM - Christchurch

Southern hospitality beckoned once more, and so it was with great anticipation that 104 people signed on for the AGM in Christchurch. The venue chosen was the University of Canterbury, and the good omens started flowing the first day of registration - a Little Owl was rather blatantly perching on a nearby tree. The poor bird probably felt that 50 eyes intently gazing at it was a touch too embarrassing, and it promptly upped sticks and departed. Thus it set the scene for a long weekend of ornithology in the region.

Saturday was another in a series of successful Scientific Days run in conjunction with AGMs. Starting off with old birds, and finishing with the use of old bird data, we were taken to 1999 and back in between, with a varied range of presentations, of which abstracts will presently be available.

The AGM itself was notable for “a little more meat on the bones” of proceedings, particularly in the general business portion. The popular recipients of various awards included Hazel Harty and Dick Veitch for meritorious service, Jamie Wood for the A.T. Edgar Junior Award, Hugh Robertson for the Falla Memorial Award and two Fellows of the Society, John Warham and Brian Bell. Congratulations to all - well done!

Sunday's field trips involved pre-dawn departures for some, in freezing temperatures. One image stays with us in particular - that of Lloyd Esler emerging out of the frosty darkness in a large pair of shorts and shirt sleeves. After five minutes of standing around he thought better of it and folded his arms.

The trip to Arthurs Pass was initially foggy at Lake Pearson, provoking painful memories of the Waikato. The difference was that it cleared to a beautiful day. The Ron and Don Show (Ron Nilsson and Don Hadden) was successful in producing extremely tame NZ Robins, Tomtits and Brown Creepers, while a return to Lake Pearson revealed, after some expert professional debate, a few Great Crested Grebes. Snoozing passengers were jolted back into life by a NZ Falcon at Porters Pass.



AGM participants at Lake Forsyth

Photo: David Medway

The Banks Peninsula trip was remarkable for its crested grebe per kilometre ratio - about one to one. Jamie Wood notes that among other interesting bits for the day were a White Heron at Kaituna Lagoon, 50+ Great Crested Grebes and three Mute Swans at Lake Forsyth, Kereru and Brown Creepers at Okuti Valley, Spotted Shags at Whitewash Head (appropriately), several shag colonies and 20 spoonbills

at Te Huinga Manu refuge and a locally banded Black-billed Gull at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.



AGM participants at Ashley River Mouth

Photo: David Medway

On Monday one field trip visited Peacock Springs, constructed from a series of old gravel pits. It proved to hold quite an eclectic - should that be *Eclectus*? - collection of animals and birds, with two of the most successful breeding birds being Cape Barren Goose and Australian Coot! The morning was rounded out by a visit to the Ashley Estuary, with spoonbills, 20 Black-fronted Terns and another banded Black-billed Gull. The birds were brilliant in the morning light.

Kaikoura-bound travellers had a treat in store for them - 18 species of sea- and shorebirds presented themselves under ideal conditions - for humans that is - all seen from the Ocean Wings viewing boat. Species included Royal and Wandering Albatross, Antarctic Fulmar, and three mollymawk species. A mixture of local knowledge and Kaikoura's finest chum proved ideal for close-ups of the ocean wanderers.

Sunday's activities were capped off with a sumptuous conference dinner and an entertaining speaker (Dave Kelly), who described the relationship between mistletoe and birds. The results of the various quizzes which kept many of us guessing throughout the weekend were announced, along with the outcome of the photographic competition and a tantalisingly brief showing of the best slides. One novelty was the addition of “blooper” prizes, awarded to gaffes and slips of the tongue observed on the weekend. Plenty of takers here, particularly from university alumni!

Top marks must go to the Canterbury team for hosting, accommodating, guiding, seeking, finding, consoling and placating a mixed bunch of ruffled birders fresh from migration - and all in their own time too. Good news for us more temperate creatures - the next AGM is in Hawkes Bay - see you there!

PAUL CUMING

OSNZ awards

1999

The 60th AGM was the occasion for the presentation of a full slate for all the possible Society awards.

A T EDGAR JUNIOR AWARD

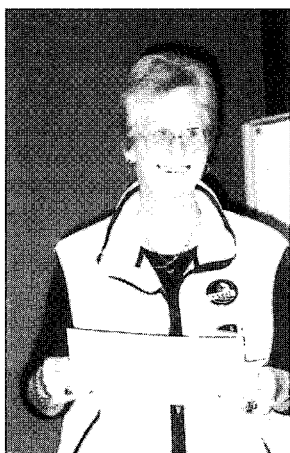


Jamie Wood and Kerry-Jayne Wilson

Jamie is the first person to win the Junior Award more than once. A 7th form student at James Hargest High School he has organised a banding programme for Black-billed gulls for two years and is the youngest person to hold a banding permit. He is an avid beach patroller and collator of beach wreck records for the Southland region. He has an interest in fossil birds.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

This was the first presentation of a new award jointly selected by Regional Representatives and Councillors from nominations recommended by any two members of the Society. The award is for meritorious service in furthering the objects of the Society.



Hazel Hartly

As a councillor and membership secretary, Hazel has managed and maintained the records of the Society

and its subscription payments, in conjunction with the storage and delivery of back numbers of the Society's publications.

Charles Richard ("Dick") Veitch

An enthusiastic participant and organiser of field projects and wader counts in the greater Auckland area and offshore islands, Dick was the organiser of the national beach patrol scheme in the 1970s and has been a regular contributor of results to various publications and journals.

R. A. FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD

Awarded for sustained service to *both* the Society *and* valuable contributions to the study of birds in the New Zealand region.

The award was made to a person who undertook his first beach patrol in 1969 - ten kilometres for one bird - a pheasant! The Society was joined the following year. The recipient was the winner of the Junior Award in 1974 and is the first member to have received both of these special awards. The person fulfills the study requirement over a wide spectrum of topics from estuarine birds, waders, feeding behaviour of harriers, ecology of Chatham Island Warblers, forest passerines and Kereru ecology, pigeons and doves, vocalisation of seabirds, Taiko expeditions and discovery team, movements of Tui, habitat preferences of birds in kahikatea forests, conservation of Kakerori in the Cook Islands, and the ecology of kiwi.

Hugh Alexander Robertson was born in 1957, graduated BSc (Hons) Massey University in 1978 and DPhil (Oxon) 1984. He served as a Councillor of the Society for 12 years from 1986 and for much of that time as Field Investigations Officer, while continuing to be the convenor of the Nest Records Scheme since 1985. He has contributed papers widely to *Notornis* and overseas journals, and to books *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, *Readers Digest Complete Book of New Zealand Birds*, *Encyclopedea of Birds* and *HANZAB*. As co-author with Barrie Heather of *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* he represents a generation of New Zealand ornithologists who have grown up in the Society and, through their efforts, foster and widen the ornithological horizons of others. Meant to be currently 'resting' from OSNZ administration of birds study to sharing with Lea some active brood rearing of their own, Hugh has still managed to cajole others and edit the recently released special Wader Memorial issue of *Notornis*.

FELLOWS



Brian and Sue Bell, with Chris Robertson



John and Pat Warham

Citations for both the Fellowships are to be published in *Notornis*.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

AGM Photo Competition

The 1999 AGM and conference drew a very high standard of entries in the photographic competition which was held in conjunction with it. The competition was judged by members of the Nature Photographic Society in accordance with the rules of professional and serious amateur photographic competitions. The results are as follow:

1st place and overall champion slide - New Zealand Falcon food pass - George Chance. Prize - a Konica camera donated by Paul's Camera Shop, Christchurch.

2nd prize - Marsh Crake - Brian Chudleigh. Prize - four rolls of colour film.

3rd prize - NZ Kingfisher with skink - Brian Chudleigh. Prize - two rolls of colour film.

The following 14 slides gained acceptance certificates:

Australasian Little Grebe - George Chance

Australasian Little Grebe - George Chance

Australasian Little Grebe and chick - George Chance

Australasian Bittern - George Chance
 Male Greenfinch feeding chicks - Brian Chudleigh
 White Heron - Brian Chudleigh
 Blue Duck pair - Brian Chudleigh
 New Zealand Robin - Simon Fordham
 Little Spotted Kiwi - Simon Fordham
 Morepork - Simon Fordham
 Morepork - Simon Fordham
 New Zealand Robin - Tiri hat - Simon Fordham
 New Zealand Pipit - Barry Hartley
 Glossy Ibis - Colin Hill
 Two Glossy Ibises - Colin Hill

A further 15 slides were not considered by the judges to be of a high enough quality for acceptance.

Sea- and Shorebird slides - 44 entries

1st prize - Red-tailed Tropicbird - Brian Chudleigh. Prize \$100 worth of vouchers from Photo and Video International, Christchurch.

2nd prize - Banded Dotterel and chick - George Chance. Prize - four rolls of colour film.

3rd prize - Terek Sandpiper wing-stretching - Brian Chudleigh. Prize - two rolls of colour film.

The following 26 slides gained acceptance certificates:

Sooty Shearwater - Nick Allen
 Red-billed Gull and chick - George Chance
 White-capped Mollmawk - George Chance
 Brown Skuas - George Chance
 White-fronted Tern - George Chance
 Royal Albatross - George Chance
 Juvenile White-fronted Tern - Brian Chudleigh
 South Island Pied Oystercatcher - Brian Chudleigh
 Red Knot in breeding plumage - Brian Chudleigh
 Turnstones landing on beach - Brian Chudleigh
 Grey-faced Petrel - Simon Fordham
 Pied Shag chick - Simon Fordham
 Royal Spoonbill - Barry Hartley
 Yellow-eyed Penguin - Barry Hartley
 Snares Crested Penguin - Barry Hartley
 Australasian Gannet with seaweed for nest - Barry Hartley
 White-capped Mollmawk - Barry Hartley
 Auckland Island Shag - Barry Hartley
 Juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - Colin Hill
 Wrybill - Colin Hill
 Southern Royal Albatross pair - Sandra Morris
 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross - Arnie Wright
 Northern Royal Albatross and chick - Arnie Wright
 Wandering Albatross - Arnie Wright
 Fiordland Crested Penguin and chick - Arnie Wright

A further 15 entries were not considered by the judges to be of a high enough quality for acceptance.

Landbird prints - four entries

1st prize - New Zealand Robin - Paul Cuming. Prize - \$100 of Agfa products.

Acceptance - White Heron - Paul Cuming.

The judges did not accept the other entries, nor award a 2nd or 3rd prize.

Postcard competition - 30 entries.

1st prize - Australasian Gannet - Geoff Arnold. Prize - \$100 of Agfa products.

2nd prize - Buller's Mollmawk - Wendy Hare. Prize - four rolls of colour film.

3rd prize - Buller's Mollmawk head - Wendy Hare. Prize - two rolls of colour film.

Acceptances:

Juvenile Black-backed Gull - Geoff Arnold
 Kereru - Geoff Arnold
 Tomtit - Geoff Arnold
 Saddleback - Amanda Byrne
 Pied Shag - Amanda Byrne
 New Zealand Pigeon - Amanda Byrne
 New Zealand Robin - Amanda Byrne
 New Zealand Robin - Amanda Byrne
 Penguin in moult - Wendy Hare
 Juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - Colin Hill
 Juvenile Banded Dotterel - Colin Hill
 Snares Crested Penguin and chicks - Wendy Hare
 Pukeko walking - Clare Washington
 A further 14 postcards were not accepted.

DON HADDEN



The winning slide - NZ Falcons

Photo: George Chance

Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

These awards will be made to individuals who have demonstrated meritorious service in the furtherance of the objects of the Society. Those objects are: *To encourage, organise and promote the study of birds and their habitat use particularly within the New Zealand region; To foster and support the wider knowledge and enjoyment of birds generally; To promote the recording and wide circulation of the results of bird studies and observations; To produce a journal and any other publication containing matters of ornithological interest; To effect cooperation and exchange of information with other organisations having similar aims and objects; To assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information from which sound management decisions can be derived; To maintain a library of ornithological literature for the use of members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds; To promote the archiving of observations, studies and records of birds particularly in the New Zealand region; To carry out any other activity which is capable of being conveniently carried out in connection with the above objects, or which directly or indirectly advances those objects or any of them.*

The award is not confined to members or past members and may be awarded to suitable non-members both in New Zealand and overseas.

An individual can be eligible for more than one award, but each must be for different services according to the objects of the Society. No individual can receive an award for a particular service more than once. A maximum of five awards can be made annually.

Nominations must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be accompanied by a typed citation of **not more than 100 words** on one side of an A4 sheet setting out the achievements of the person nominated.

All nominations should be sent to the
 Awards Secretary
 P.O. Box 12397
 Wellington
 by 31 December 1999.

C.J.R. Robertson
 President

Student Competition

Short Paper on New Zealand Bird Study

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand will sponsor an annual short scientific paper-writing competition for full-time students. Students have the opportunity to submit a short note, review or summary. This must be on an ornithological technique, topic or study, and can include taxonomy and identifications, avian biology, behavioural studies, field ornithology (including distribution, status, censusing, migration, population, habitat and breeding ecology), equipment techniques, methods and surveys relating specifically to the birds of Australasia, Oceania and Antarctica, with special reference to the New Zealand region.

1. Students are not required to be members of the Society when entering the competition. Students must be able to demonstrate, with a certificate from their institution, that they have been registered as **full-time students** in the 12 months prior to the closing date of the competition on 10 April 2000. There is no age limit.

2. All papers for the competition will be limited to single authors, and a **maximum size** of: - 75 word abstract, 4 keywords, 1,000 words of body text, 10 principal references and 4 black and white drawings or photographs. The style of presentation should follow the publication specifications for a short note in the journal *Notornis*.

3. Individuals may make more than one entry.

4. A judging panel of three will select a winner and two other placegetters. The prizes to be awarded will be a 3, 2, or 1 year membership of the Ornithological Society of NZ, which provides concessional page charges to members publishing papers.

5. All entries to the competition will be submitted by the judging panel to the Society's Editor as short notes to *Notornis*, be peer reviewed as for short notes, and subsequently published in a special section entitled Student Corner. No page charges will be levied on any material published in this section. All competitors will be expected to provide any revisions required by the Editor or referees before publication.

6. Prize winners may not enter in subsequent years.

7. The Competition is advertised from September. **Candidates wishing**

to enter shall register for the competition by submitting their entry form (obtainable from the Secretary, P O Box 12397, Wellington) and their abstract by 30 November 1999. The closing date for the final submission of the full paper is 10 April 2000.

8. Results will be announced at annual Conference and AGM of the

Society at the beginning of June 2000, and all entrants will be notified by post to the address on their entry form. Prize winners may be invited to present their papers orally at the next annual Conference in Napier.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

SALE OF FIELD GUIDE PAINTINGS

Enclosed with your *OSNZ News* you will find a catalogue for the sale of the paintings by **Derek Onley** that were commissioned by the Society for the production of *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* published in 1996.

There have been few sets of paintings setting out to cover the complete New Zealand bird fauna since the first attempt in *Buller's Birds* over 100 years ago. This is a unique opportunity to own your own painting, and to be a part of the history of ornithology in New Zealand. Any revenue from the sale, after the covering of costs, will be equally divided between the artist and the Projects Assistance Fund of the Society from which the original commissioning was funded.

Webbs are an art auction house of international reputation whose colour printed and illustrated catalogues (usually about NZ\$25) are distributed all over the world. It has been their decision to restrict the offering to 25 lots, even though some lots contain a number of paintings.

The catalogues distributed here are specific to members of the Society and their friends. These catalogues have no illustrations as *The Field Guide* provides these. Each lot provides the specific descriptive references to that guide. For those persons who have the newer *Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*, (Robertson & Heather, Penguin 1999) for reference, the plate and page numbers are the same.

The paintings are for sale by auction to the highest bidder. The dollar prices indicated are what the auctioneers expect to be an indicative starting price when bidding for the lot. For lots which may contain more than one picture, you will be buying all the paintings in that lot. However, you may find it appropriate to join together as a group to bid for the lot and then distribute the paintings amongst the group. Special interest groups may choose to buy a group of paintings for special display or further sale or prizes within the group. We are sure that Society members and their friends will be appropriately innovative in their bidding methods.

Please read the printed Conditions of Sale on the back of the bidding slip carefully. You must set a maximum level for your bid, as Webbs will not accept a bid to 'buy' at any price.

Should you wish to have a live bid made on your behalf from the floor, rather than by sending a bid sheet to Webbs you may contact the Treasurer, Mark Nee and make arrangements with him for bidding through members who may be attending the sale.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

Kakapo Update

Sixty-two Kakapo, including six juveniles from the 1999 season, are known to survive - 26 females and 36 males. 15 (9 males, 6 females) are progeny raised since 1991 from translocated birds. The remainder are from Stewart Island, with the exception of the aged male Richard Henry, the last

known surviving individual from a mainland New Zealand population.

An unexpected breeding attempt on Pearl Island in early 1999 has proven to be the most productive in recent times. Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) birds were moved temporarily to Pearl in 1998 to facilitate rat eradication on Whenua Hou. While on Pearl, five females produced seven nests (14 eggs). All eggs were removed because of the high risk of predation by rats and Weka, with the

exception of one egg from a two egg second clutch which was predated before it could be collected.

In addition a nest of three eggs was found on Little Barrier Island. Eggs were artificially incubated and chicks hand reared at Burwood Bush Rearing Unit near Te Anau. Altogether eleven eggs were fertile, of which eight hatched. Six juveniles, including four females, survive. This was the third successive season when which some breeding has occurred.

The first Kakapo egg to be incubated artificially full term was hatched at Burwood Bush during the 1999 season. This event has important implications for future management, and has enabled us finally to confirm c.30 days as the incubation period.

The juveniles from this season were the first to have been hand raised from hatching - an important advance in management capability.

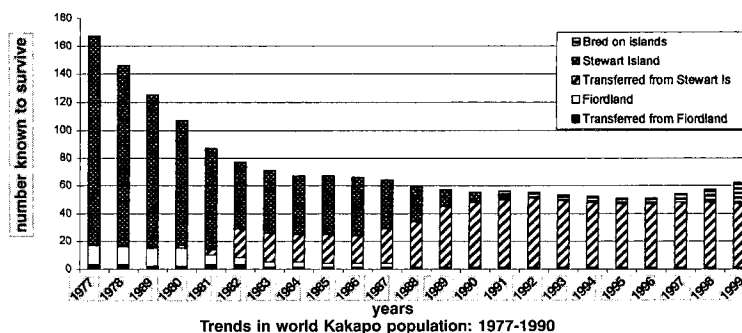
The season also produced confirmation that Kakapo are capable of laying a second clutch of eggs within one season. After many years of speculation, this question has finally been answered. This important discovery may provide a means to boost productivity in the ultra-slow breeding Kakapo. Heavy females (ie of around 2 kg body weight before breeding) are not only able to breed, but are capable of re-nesting if recycled early. The two females that laid second clutches this season weighed between 1.8 and 2.4 kg in the months preceding the 1999 season. Previously no heavy female is known to have bred, and efforts have therefore been made to limit the weight of supplementary-fed birds.

Lisa, a female "lost" for 13 years on Little Barrier, was last seen when her transmitter was removed in 1986. She was found in March this year, incubating three viable and well advanced eggs. All three, hatched and raised artificially, are female! Lisa, the last remaining female on Little Barrier, is to be removed to Maud Island in September.

Two further females are now known to be capable of producing fertile eggs - thus 13 (65%) of the 20 adult females have laid fertile eggs since the rediscovery of females in 1980.

Age is known for the 17 birds hatched since 1980. The remainder are of unknown age but are greater than 20 years old. Subadults now comprise c.21% of the population. Only one adult death (in July 1998, as a result of complications from a harness injury in mid 1995) is known to have occurred in the last five years. With 12 juveniles in the last three seasons and just one adult death in the last five years, the Kakapo is at last showing signs of recovery!

Lisa, the remaining known female on



Trends in world Kakapo population: 1977-1999

Little Barrier, was located after Saskia Wood and Mike Imber found classic mating sign at the summit track and bowl system, indicating that at least one of two "lost" females survived. Allan Munn, Murray Williams and their dogs were quickly brought for a search of likely nesting areas, and in a needle in a haystack quest, Allan and his dog found Lisa incubating three eggs. Since she has not been trained to take artificial food, and as rats are present on Little Barrier, her eggs were removed to Burwood Bush. Her three female chicks were released on Whenua Hou in late July. A further female may still survive on Little Barrier. At least 16 of the original 22

released on the island still survive, giving an average annual survival rate of c. 99%.

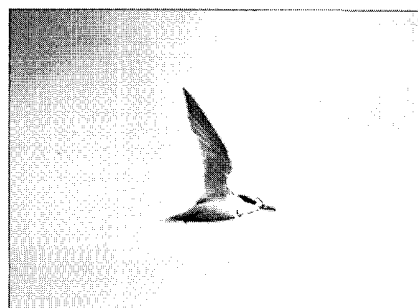
36 Kakapo are on Whenua Hou. All 30 transmitterised Kakapo were removed in 1998 to alleviate any risk from rat poisoning during last winter's attempt to eradicate rats. 26 birds were transferred to Pearl Island, two males to Anchorage Island and one male and one female to Maud. One non-transmitterised male could not be located, but was relocated in October 1998 and appears unaffected by the poisoning operation. 26 birds held on Pearl and Anchorage Island were returned to Whenua Hou in April, and one more in July. The last five males from Little Barrier were released in July.

DON MERTON

Fairy Tern survey - autumn 99

During March, April and May 1999 some twenty OSNZ members and ten Fairy Tern supporters conducted a series of surveys to try to determine the current population of this endemic New Zealand subspecies and to check on the survival of chicks fledged during the 1997/98 and 1998/99 breeding seasons.

Seven pairs attempted to breed this past season - two at Waipu, three at Mangawhai and two at Papakanui, involving eight banded and six unbanded birds. One banded bird was found dead at Mangawhai during the season. Of the remaining seven, six have been accounted for post-breeding. We sighted unbanded birds simultaneously on 19 March, making a minimum of six in the current population, the same number as attempted to breed.



Fairy Tern at Waikiri Creek. 16 April 1999. Photo: David Medway

National Twitchathon

At the joint Council and RRs' meeting in Christchurch in June, it was decided to conduct the first national New Zealand Twitchathon. Birdwatchers from throughout the country will have the opportunity to compete for the prestigious *Porphyrio mantelli* Mantelpiece Monstrosity

The point of this pointless exercise is that completed entries, as well as being judged in order to ascertain who is the winner, will be collated and a species list sent to NTT Japan. As in the past, this communications company will forward a cash donation for each species seen world-wide to BirdLife International, for use in bird conservation projects, mainly in third world countries.

Entry is free and will run for the entire month of October. RRs have details of rules, team composition and other details. The Twitchathon is intended to be primarily a bit of fun, but it is also a good excuse to get out to those places perhaps not visited as often as they might be. It will also hone up your bird finding skills in as many habitats as are available to you. So, get out there on a beautiful spring day, see lots of birds, take part in a light-hearted competition and help raise funds for birds.

NICK ALLEN

Two of the three chicks banded in January 1999 were observed during the survey period, and five of the seven fledged the previous season were also sighted. Our surveys would suggest a minimum of 19 of New Zealand's rarest and most endearing little birds appear to be alive and well.

Sam Ferreira, Conservancy Advisory Scientist for DoC Auckland, has designed a population model, using the existing database information, which allows him to derive a population estimate based on post-breeding sightings. Sam's current estimate is c.21 individuals.



Fairy Tern at Waikiri Creek. 16 April 1999. Photo: David Medway

In March, April, June and September 1998, three separate groups of NGO observers encountered unbanded juveniles at two separate sites on the Kaipara Harbour on five separate occasions, indicating that perhaps a pair of Fairy Terns may have bred somewhere over the previous summer that we were all unaware of. The youngsters had thus eluded Ray Pierce's banding pliers. By now (June) they would be in their second winter plumage and would therefore be inseparable in the field from other, older unbanded birds in winter plumage. If they had survived until now I would have expected a higher number of unbanded birds during our post-breeding surveys, but this was unfortunately not the case.

Two of the above-mentioned unbanded juvenile/immature birds sighted in September 1998 at Tapora were accompanied by two unbanded birds whose plumage was not consistent with the norm for the subspecies at that time of the year. Could it be that we are encountering another subspecies out on the Kaipara Harbour from time to time? And are these extra juveniles arriving from somewhere else?

Thanks to all the observers who took part in the surveys, particularly those who "terned" out in gale force winds in April. To the residents of Waikiri Creek who have loaned us kayaks, ferried us to roost sites and allowed us to stay in their homes, we express our gratitude for your on-going support and assistance.

An invitation is extended to any

ornithologist from any part of New Zealand who may be visiting northern climes in autumn 2000 to join us for one or all of the surveys next year. The accommodation is fairly basic and inexpensive. Dates will be advertised in *OSNZ News* "What's On" just as soon as they are available. The Kaipara is at its best in March and April with Arctic waders amassing prior to migration, NZ Dotterels forming post-breeding flocks, White-fronted Terns in their thousands preparing to "cross the ditch" and there's always the chance of a rare tern or two or three....

GWENDA PULHAM

Great Grebe Year

Well known for their extended breeding season, The Great Crested Grebes on Lake Hayes excelled themselves last breeding season. I observed the first two chicks, which appeared to be about 3 weeks old, on 15 November 1998, one of which was on the back of its parent. The first nest must therefore have been built in October, and the last nest to be seen was sighted near the showground on 5 March 1999. It contained three eggs and incubation started at about that time.

A survey conducted on 2 February 1999 revealed a total of 25 adults, and also that nine breeding pairs had produced 18 young. The experienced birds appear to nest first, and I was able to photograph an example of a double brood. A pair that had nested early, and had lost one of its two chicks, went on to have a second clutch and produced two more chicks.

Fierce territorial disputes took place, which in one instance almost led to an intentional drowning. Two adults in combat disappeared under a low-growing willow and all became quiet. A splash of chestnut revealed one bird holding the other firmly by the neck and forcing its head under water. By moving the bow of the boat towards them I was able to effect a release.

When the main breeding effort was over, the young adults moved in to take up and defend territory. It is not unusual for young females, two year olds, to have white plumage in front of their eyes. I was able to photograph a pair of young adults. The female had white plumage above and in front of the eyes and the male had white plumage in front of the eyes only. The white plumage tends to disappear as the birds develop. Two young pairs held territory for many weeks on either side of the outlet and, although they showed every indication

of building a platform or nest for copulation, this did not happen. I would return for several weeks to find that their union had not been consummated.

I have not seen the weed dance, but what I have observed on many occasions is a type of weed ceremony, in which an adult will dive and then present weed for visual inspection only. The partner will then dive and repeat the process. This is usually an indication that nest building is about to take place.

One splendid sight at Lake Hayes was a group of five grebes near the outlet: two adults with their well-developed adolescents. A check made in March totalled 29 adults and 15 young. The young included three chicks produced by two pairs during the month of March. I expected to find more young birds and, while there is a loss from predators, it is possible that some adolescents had already departed.

The scene at Lake Moke is not so encouraging. A pair arrives each spring, builds a nest in late December, fails and departs a few weeks later. This has been the pattern for four years. The question is, will they return in the spring of 1999?

GEORGE CHANCE

Albino Whio - mistaken identity

During a survey of Blue Ducks on western diversion streams (Tongariro power scheme) in February of this year, I discovered an albino male Blue Duck on the Mangatepopo Stream approximately 300m downstream of the intake dam.

The bird is not a total albino. He has normal yellow eyes, slight pale grey streaks under the wings and on the crown, and very faint muddy yellow streaks on the breast. From a distance of ten metres or more however he appears to be all white apart from the eyes.

As if this sighting wasn't interesting enough, he was occupying and defending a territory with another male of normal colour.

I decided to test if this strange relationship was actually a pair bond, and was fortunate enough to have an American university student, Arin Doherty, make an in-depth activity time budget comparison between a usual male/female pair and this male/male pair.

Arin and I designed an activity score sheet which recorded time values for seven main activities loosely based on

that of Veltman & Williams 1990. These activities were - stand, preen, feed, fly, swim, sleep, other.

In addition to this, other activities were recorded which did not have value. These included: territory defense, calling, together or apart, direct pair interaction which included calling laterally at each other, preening of mate, chasing and pecking of mate.

The time values were totalled daily in minutes and the total number of minutes over the five week study period were depicted in pie graph form, producing the following results:

Activity Budget Totals

	Slp	Fd	Swm	Std	Prn	Fly	Oth
Albino male	57%	12%	10%	10%	9%	0%	2%
Male mate	51%	8%	13%	15%	11%	0%	2%
Normal male	12%	8%	12%	61%	6%	0%	1%
Normal female	9%	15%	40%	20%	16%	0%	0%

No. Times other behaviours occurred

	Alb male	Malemate	Nml male	Nml flm
Call	31	4	1	0
Defence	0	0	2	0
Pair interaction	14	1	0	0

Arin concluded from these results that the male/male pair was not actually defending a territory or maintaining a pair bond. Most of the albino male's initiated pair interactions were actually aggressive attempts to dispel his male partner. The normal pair had higher time values for the active activities and spent considerably less time sleeping.

The albino male showed dominant behaviours over his mate, and other anecdotal evidence collected during the study suggested that his mate preferred to associate with other male Blue Ducks and could not call properly, either due to physical impediment or a desire to display submissive behaviour.

Two other very interesting observations were made during the study. On one occasion seven Whio were seen on a pool involved in a strange sort of fracas, where two birds were in the centre of the pool fighting vigorously, while the remaining five ducks slowly circled. Occasionally one of the circling ducks would swim into the middle and try and break up the fighting pair. The fighting birds were grabbing each other's necks and pulling each other down under the water as if trying to drown its opponent. Wing spurs were not used in this interaction.

On another occasion the albino male was seen sitting on a pool beside a frequently used cave. He reared up and flew vertically out of the water and flew straight up to a perch on a rock ledge about 40 metres above stream level, where he walked into dense vegetation

and appeared to be feeding. On examination of this perch it was found that seepage had created a small pool in the cliff face, surrounded by shrubs and grasses. He was most likely feeding in the pool. He then perched on the rock ledge and slept for more than two hours.

Direct vertical flight from a stationary position has never been seen before in 13 years of Blue Duck study by the author, and was more characteristic of Mallard or Paradise Shelduck behaviour than that of Blue Ducks.

KERRY OATES

OSNZ Sales Items

The following publications are available from OSNZ Sales, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

<i>Chatham Islands Ornithology</i> . 1994. 208 pp.	\$15.00
<i>The Black Robin</i> . 1992. 294 pp.	\$18.00
<i>Checklist of the Birds of NZ and the Ross Dependency</i> . 1990. 247 pp.	\$10.00
<i>Fifty Years of Bird Study in NZ - an index to Notornis</i> . 1939-1989.	\$10.00
<i>A Flying Start - 50 years of OSNZ</i> . 1940-1990. 217 pp.	\$10.00
<i>Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ</i> . 1985. 296 pp. with microfiches	\$25.00
without microfiches	\$15.00
<i>Beach Patroller's Guide to Storm-cast Seabirds in NZ</i> .	\$7.00
<i>Birds of Nelson region and where to find them</i> . 1990. 24 pp.	\$10.00
<i>Birdwatching in Hawkes Bay - a guide to prime locations</i> . 1993. 20 pp.	\$ 6.00
OSNZ Pied Stilt car stickers.	\$ 3.00
OSNZ metal lapel badges.	\$ 5.50
Tick sheets - pocket checklist of NZ birds.	\$ 1.00
OSNZ greeting cards - 10 to a pack with envelopes.	\$ 4.00
(inscribed Best Wishes - Fantail, Pied Stilt, Bellbird, Tomtit. No inscription - Tui, Shining Cuckoo. No inscription, mixed packs - Red-crowned and Antipodes Parakeets.)	

Please make cheques payable to Ornithological Society. All prices are inclusive of postage, packaging and GST. Overseas orders will be charged in the same price in US\$, will be charged for postage and may be paid by Visa.

DEREK BATCHELER

New Members

A warm welcome to all our new members:

Stella Say, Sheila Belshaw, Maureen Howard, D.M. York, Ashley & Sue Reed, Frank Bendall, Mark Jarrett, Tony Henry, Peter Stengard, Anita Spencer, Jan Walker, Shawn Loewen, Sarah Winter, Celia Thompson, Nicola Etheridge, Dawn Palmer, Margaret & David Fraser, Kate Chamberlain, Norman & Anna

Bradley, Ross Kearney, Gerard Hutchings, James Hart, Stefan Thomson, Elsie Smith, Trish Whillians, Ngaire Chamlet, Lynette Hartley, Sally Fraser, Rachel Keedwell, Diane Kerr, M.A. Richards, Amanda Byrne, James Russell, Christine Zeiler, Peter Field, Michael Roy, Elizabeth Saafi, Anne Young, Ed Bickerstaff, Sharron Mather, Denis Gibbs and from the UK Alison Crozier.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Donations to the Society

A very big thank to you the following for their donations to OSNZ: Bill Campbell, Frank Bendall, Pasi Hyvonen, Grant Harper, M.A. Richards, Jan Walker, Nancy D. Tanner, Peter Field, Denis Gibbs.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

New from Broome

Every year the Broome Bird Observatory in north-western Australia collects data on the northward movement of migratory shorebirds. This year David Stewart, wildlife sound recordist, was at the BBO recording the sound of flocks in the process of migrating.

Over the past few years several observers have commented on the difference in calls of these birds as they flock together and begin their northward journeys. I had related this anecdotal observation to Dave on a previous visit to Broome. Our discussions gave him the idea that he would like to be here to witness this amazing event. His recordings will eventually be lodged with the Australian National Wildlife Collection, CSIRO, Canberra.

Good sound recordings are very difficult to get, as Dave was constantly reminding us! Despite the fact that thousands of birds fly over as people note flock size and species, it is not as simple as grabbing a microphone and pointing it in their general direction. Cars, motorbikes, boats, aeroplanes and the constant babble of fascinated birdwatchers all conspired to make Dave Stewart's life quite tricky. Add to this the background noise, the squelch of knee-deep mud as Dave ventured out on to the Roebuck Bay mudflats to get closer to his subject.

Despite these problems he ended up with some superb sound. David was successful in recording the migrating

calls of Black- and Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Great and Red Knots, Red-necked Stint, Grey Plover, Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers and Gull-billed Tern. Ruddy Turnstones and Common Sandpipers were also recorded calling persistently, but they were not actually seen to migrate. It is very likely the "snipe-like" call recorded on the mudflats is Asian Dowitcher.

The beach in front of the Broome Bird Observatory is a sensational spot to watch shorebirds gather into pre-migratory flocks. Some species groups cease feeding, preen and stretch their wings. Small species hover approximately 50 centimetres above the mud in warm-up exercises. Larger species gather in east to west lines and begin simultaneous, circular "recruitment flights", seeming to encourage other birds to join the flocks.

When they decide that the time is right, they swirl upwards and the excited calling begins. All the species call. Whimbrels and Grey-tailed Tattlers are the best exponents of frenzied noise-making. It got to the stage where Dave needed these particular species to shut up!

After five weeks of hard work, patience and skill, Dave had gathered some quality sound on shorebirds. These special sounds, along with a good selection of Broome's other great birds, has meant that David Stewart has been able to produce a special one-off CD. Anyone interested can contact Dave at <davidstewart@naresound.com.au>, P.O. Box 256, Mullumbimby, NSW 2482, Australia. Ph/fax 61 (2) 6684 0127.

CHRIS HASSELL
courtesy of *The Tattler* 20, July 1999

Australian sound recordist David Stewart spent 6 weeks at Broome, NW Australia during the migration period in 1999 and managed to record an astounding number of wader calls, which are available on a self-produced CD (*Bird Calls of the Broome Region*). 36 waders are presented on this CD (some recordings are from elsewhere in Australia and two are contributed from other recordists) as well as another 46 bird species found in the Broome region. What is truly impressive for wader workers is not simply the large number of species recorded, but that David managed to record the calls of migrating flocks in 13 species. Anyone who has worked on migrating waders will know that the first cue for picking up a departing flock is almost invariably the loud and distinctive calls, and to have these on record is a great achievement.

Individual recordings are typically short, of around 5-20 seconds duration. Each species though, has 1-5 different recordings of birds in different situations, for which both habitat and behaviour are noted in the CD liner. For example, Whimbrel has: mudflats (individual flying); mudflats (individual); mudflats (individual); migrating (+Bar-tailed Godwits); migrating (small flock).

Some of the recordings are likely to be world firsts, at least in published form. The migrating calls of the departing flocks may be the first widely available, and the Asian Dowitcher alone would justify buying the CD to many twitchers! The quality of the recordings is extremely good, with minimal background noise (the bubbling tides of Roebuck Bay will be an evocative reminder for any fortunate enough to have been to the NW).

In addition to many of the common migratory waders occurring in New Zealand (Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Turnstone, Pacific Golden Plover, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint) there are plenty of scarcer species or vagrants to bone up on, such as Black-tailed Godwit, Little Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Oriental Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Oriental Pratincole as well as some residents such as Black-fronted Dotterel.

Learning wader calls is a challenging but rewarding enterprise, and this CD will be invaluable to any serious waderologist. A recording beats a sonogram hands down for learning calls, and a CD beats a cassette likewise. So what could be better than a CD of wader calls?! Anyone planning a trip to NW Australia would also find this CD a great addition to their planning and preparation, whether wader enthusiasts or not, as the non-waders constitute a substantial portion of the recordings, and include such birds as five species of cuckoo and northern specialties such as Broad-billed Flycatcher, Red-headed Honeyeater, Mangrove Golden and White-breasted Whistlers. So get in before the Christmas rush, support the self-producing recordists of the world, and scour the mudflats this summer with an open ear!

The CD is available from the Birds Australia Shop for AU\$24 plus \$5 postage. E-mail sales@raou.co.au, phone +61-3-9882-2622, fax +61-3-9882-2677 or write to 415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn, East Victoria, Australia 3123.

PHIL BATTLE

Duck Decline?

There appears to have been a dramatic decline in Mallard numbers this past season, and there is genuine concern on the part of the Fish and Game Council as a result of their surveys and anecdotal evidence.

There are a number of possible reasons for the decline in the Auckland/Waikato area. Floods destroyed a large number of nests. ECNZ dropped the level of Lake Taupo on a three weekly cycle, so any birds between the lake and the first Waikato dam were flooded out each time they tried to re-establish their nests, and the effect was felt right down the river.

When the floods finished, the drought started, which concentrated the birds where there was some water and avian botulism resulted. Large areas of land were sprayed for crickets which, it is believed, killed a lot of birds.

The Whangamarino has been a desert all summer, and ten years ago it supported a population of 60,000 Mallards. Lakes Waikere and Whangape are both decaying, with little water going through them. Everything downstream has been affected and they are now supporting only 10% of the waterfowl of five to ten years ago.

It is known that more adult birds are being harvested than juveniles, which means the breeding stock is being reduced.

In the Wellington region, including Wairarapa, Fish and Game noted in their pre-release press report that although the 1998 spring was a good breeding season, the continuing effects of the very dry La Nina summer had been severe on duck survival.

The population dynamics are a cyclical thing, and with fewer waterfowl breeding there is more feed and the bounce-back should be quite dramatic. It must be remembered though that the impact of predation is increased. Is it enough to step up predator control and leave the rest to nature, or should Ducks Unlimited be doing more?

Clearly any increase in the absolute area of wetland available to all waterfowl will help to counter the impact of the kinds of influences noted above. If there is to be an increase, for whatever reasons, in the frequency of drought and other extreme weather events, the buffering effects of wetlands become even more important. Wetlands in good condition will continue to provide abundant waterfowl for hunting, provide hunting areas, beautify the landscape and provide habitat for other wildlife species.

GRAHAM GURR & DAVID SMITH
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magazine, July 1999

RFI: New Caledonia

Have any birders been to New Caledonia and seen migrants which may be new to the island? The birds of New Caledonia are poorly known and even more poorly written up. I'm writing a definitive list of the birds and their status, together with resident Caledonian birders and the recent expedition which rediscovered the New Caledonia Owllet-Nightjar (one seen in November 1997, soon to be published).

There are some common waders, such as Lesser Sand Plover, which may not have been recorded, and three crakes of unknown status. We are also interested in records of resident birds, especially the rarer endemics, away from well-known sites.

We would be very grateful for any records that might improve our knowledge of NC birds. All records used will be fully referenced and acknowledged to their observer.

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Rarebits



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

North Island Brown Kiwi - The Minister of Conservation recently visited the Rarewarewa (Northland) kiwi study site, and announced stoat control research funding. He met an adult female kiwi, and a juvenile that hatched at the beginning of September 1998. Kiwi chick recruitment at Rarewarewa is looking very promising, with at least 11 survivors amongst the chicks from the 1998/99 season, six of which are over 1 kg. Hugh Robertson's dog Ollie added six chicks to the sample of five transmittered chicks.

The 1998/99 season was a little disappointing in Tongariro Forest, with only one chick raised from nine eggs collected from five nesting attempts. A further three nesting attempts failed altogether.

The good news was that 10 of 12 Operation Nest Egg birds raised at Rainbow Springs and released back into the forest over the past two years continue to thrive. The fate of the remaining two is not known following transmitter failure/loss, but we are hopeful that they are thriving too.

The Conservancy has also contributed equipment and staff time to a study of kiwi in a 13,000 ha pine plantation (Waimarino Forest) at Raetihi being conducted by Kerry Oates in

association with local iwi and Winstones Pulp International.

A female kiwi was handed into staff at Ohakune recently, after being caught in a possum trap on private farm land near Raetihi. She will spend a few weeks recovering from a broken foot at the Otorohanga Kiwi House before being released back into her home. This is the fourth incident involving kiwi and possum traps that we are aware of in this part of the country over the past three years.

Kokako - In August and October 1998 pre-breeding surveys were carried out in three areas of Puketi Forest. 16 Kokako were located, one pair and 14 single birds. There was only one known breeding pair of Kokako in Puketi Forest this season, which made four nesting attempts. The first three attempts were abandoned, while the fourth produced two chicks, one of which fledged.

Moehau birds - Moehau, at the northern tip of the Coromandel Peninsula, is the highest priority ecological site for restoration on the peninsula. Bait stations are installed over 4,005 ha and possum numbers are very low. Rat monitoring began late last year.

Some of the major findings from recent bird monitoring (as part of DoC's programme to restore the mauri of the mountain) were:

- a Rifleman sighted in the Stony Creek catchment - this species was though to be absent from the Coromandel.

- Kakariki heard on two occasions in the upper Stony Creek catchment (not known if they were made by Red- or Yellow-crowned Parakeets).

- a large number of Kaka records, sufficient to suggest that a viable population exists.

- low numbers of Kukupa (New Zealand Pigeon).

- moderate kiwi call rates in the Tangiaro catchment (2.5 per hour) compared with the Stony catchment (0.1 per hour).

NZ Dotterel - The Opotiki area has mixed success with this season's New Zealand Dotterel monitoring programme. The overall chick production was down with eight chicks fledged from the three monitored breeding sites. The result is an average of five fewer birds than the previous four years' results. All of the chicks came from six pairs at the Waiaua site.

This year Pindone poison was used at Waiotahi and Waiau in conjunction with a limited number of traps immediately around the nesting area, but this method failed to remove the threats to the nests. Neither the Waiotahi nor the Waioeka site was able to fledge

a single chick despite removing 16 stoats, a weasel and nine hedgehogs.

Last year a chick that was banded at Waiaua turned up at Pollen Island in the Waitemata Harbour, Auckland. This is about 260 km in a straight line from its natal territory.

Southern New Zealand Dotterels have had a spectacular season on Stewart Island. The excellent work on feral cat control has boosted numbers by 100% in four years of seasonal control. A project thought by many as unachievable is now delivering the goods.

After two seasons of poor results with cat control at Table Hill, the whole programme was reviewed in 1994 and performance targets were set. More resources have been given to the project and the number of managed sites increased.

The population is now at 150 - in 1994 it was 65. The target for this year had been 109. Cat control will continue, and research into cat habitat use via a radio telemetry study will begin.

Takahe - In the Murchison Mountains, this summer's population of adult Takahe is 126 (106 last year). Last winter was an excellent survival and breeding season. There are 27 wild reared chicks, up from not many last year. Eight captive reared birds had been released in October 1998, and are not in the 126 total. 14 chicks were successfully reared at Burwood.

Recently chick banding/radio-tagging was carried out in the Murchisons - until the team was chased out by snow. An energetics study is underway at Burwood, looking at the cost of wearing a transmitter and comparative energetics with Burwood and island sites.

The programme continues to benefit from the 1997 review. The improved results may be seasonal, but also relate to the increased effort going into the project.

Mohua - Numbers of Mohua appear to have recovered from the stoat plague of 1995/96 and the hard winter of 1996. All is set for the stoat plague of the century in 1999/2000!

The Rowallen population is in excess of 500 birds, and other populations in western Southland are larger than expected (100-300 birds). An exciting new find is the healthy population at Pig Creek near the Borland Lodge. With some stoat control, all bodes well for Mohua survival.

Saddlebacks, NZ Robins and Banded Rails - The 1998/99 summer on Stewart Island was a podocarp mast year

- really good if you are a Kakapo or a rat. Ulva Island had two Norway rats trapped in January and March. Subsequent trapping - 7,000 trap nights - revealed no further rats. This forced us to cancel a Saddleback introduction, right at the stage when the catching team was on the source island.

The Saddleback move to Ulva was only part of the operation in which all the following happened in a joint DoC/ Ngai Tahu projects: Saddlebacks from Kundy Island to Pohowaitai Island, Banded Rails from Pohowaitai to Kundy (a restoration), and when the Ulva saddleback task was abandoned the DoC/iwi team organised a shift of Stewart Is Robins from Pohowaitai to Putauhinu (a restoration).

A research student is investigating the decline of Stewart Is Robins on Stewart Island.

Taiko - Estimates of Taiko population range from 50 to 120 birds. Since its rediscovery in 1978 by David Crockett and the first breeding burrows being located in the Tuku Valley, main Chatham Island, in 1987, about 25 burrows in two distinct areas have been located. Six of them are known breeding burrows.

The 1998/99 season started in a promising way, with five of the known burrows being regularly visited by adult birds during the prospecting period. Unfortunately only two of these had eggs laid in them, but both produced healthy chicks. This is the third year in a row that every Taiko egg laid has produced a fledgling. This year's effort is due to the hard work and dedication of contractors Alison Turner and Rex Williams.

To help protect both adult and juvenile Taiko from predation, trapping and poisoning began in September and finished in late April, just before the chicks were due to leave the burrows. This season 27 cats, 114 Weka, 105 possums and 169 rats were caught in the southern burrows area where breeding took place. Many other rats (and probably Weka and cats) are likely to have been poisoned.

For the first time, Taiko burrows were monitored using infra-red video cameras at the burrow entrances. These provided valuable information that will assist future management, including confirmation of the times each of the adult birds visited the burrow, adult behaviour on entering and leaving (rapid entry and cautious exit), the age at which chicks first appeared at the burrow entrance, the chick behaviour - they spent long periods of time outside the burrow (and were therefore vulnerable to predation) in the 2-3 weeks before fledging.

Just prior to fledging, each chick was banded, had a blood sample taken, and a small transmitter attached to its tail feathers. The transmitter is to relocate the chick if it should not reach the sea on its first attempt at flying. The value

of this was shown again this year, with one chick being returned to its burrow on two occasions before finally making it out to sea. They finally fledged on the nights of 11 and 13 May. DNA analysis showed that one chick was male and one female.

Chatham Petrel - Contractor Fiona Bancroft, with assistance from staff skills development participants, has run the programme on Rangatira (South East Island). Results are very encouraging, with 42 of 54 known breeding burrows producing fledglings.

Control of competing Broad-billed Prions has been less intensive this year, with generally fewer birds returning than in a "typical" year. Despite this, we had to be ever vigilant to protect the petrel chicks from prions. Teams of workers monitored each petrel burrow nightly from early February. The total world population of Chatham Petrels is estimated at 500-1,000, and is confined to Rangatira.

Chatham Is Oystercatcher - A census organised by Frances Schmechel in December counted 142 birds, an increase of 20-40 birds over previous estimates. Intensive predator control work by Mike Bell along the Maunganui and Wharekauri coasts (northern main Chatham) resulted in 18 chicks fledging from 16 managed pairs. Most nest failures were due to high seas, with only one nest known to have been lost to a predator (Black-backed Gull). It is not surprising so little predation occurred - Mike removed 47 cats, 654 Weka, 133 possums, 39 hedgehogs and 23 Black-backed Gulls from sites.

Fencing to reduce stock access to key oystercatcher areas is planned at Wharekauri. Research into exact causes of nest failure (using video monitoring equipment) is planned for the coming season and should run for at least three years. Cameras will monitor managed nests (where there is predator control) and unmanaged nests, to test the effectiveness of management and to refine and improve techniques.

Black Robin - It was another good breeding season also for Black Robins, with an end of season population count of 254 birds, 182 on Rangatira and 72 on Mangere. 106 chicks fledged this season.

The intensive monitoring programme for Black Robins is likely to be scaled down in coming years. Rather than individually marking and following the fate of every Black Robin, the new monitoring technique will focus on the population as a whole, plus sampling the productivity of a few pairs on each island.

Forbes' Parakeet - The breeding success of Forbes' Parakeet on Mangere was followed by Raelene Barry and her team. 54 eggs were laid in 25 nest boxes and approximately 13 chicks fledged. The total Forbes' Parakeet population is about 100 birds, confined to Mangere

and Little Mangere Islands.

Recent mitochondrial DNA research on parakeets by Victoria University has shown that Forbes' Parakeets are very distinct from other parakeet species, and not closely related to either Yellow-crowned or Red-crowned Parakeets, with which they are currently hybridising.

The Forbes' Parakeet programme will be boosted considerably in the coming season, and will focus on the breeding biology of the species, interactions with Red-crowned Parakeets, and refining the accurate identification of hybrids by looking at the link between morphological appearance and microsatellite nuclear DNA indicators.

Shore Plover - The recent telemetric monitoring of juvenile Shore Plovers on Rangatira has not picked up any dispersal of these birds to other islands. Sandy King has been making regular checks on the adjacent Pitt Island coastline, and a sweep or the Eastern Reef and Star Keys in early May picked up no transmitter signals.

The female Shore Plover that has now been resident on Mangere Island for a year continues to lead a solitary existence. Next season will see an attempt to give her some company, with the release of young birds from Rangatira. These birds will be held in a temporary aviary on Mangere to condition them to their new home before release.

Chatham Is Tui - Sandy King has been checking to see whether any of the birds fitted with transmitters on Rangatira this summer have moved across to Pitt Island. So far three out of ten have been found on Pitt. One bird flies backwards and forwards every few days.

Erect-crested Penguin - A University of Otago study on the Antipodes Islands has reported a very concerning trend in Erect-crested Penguins, with the second successive population crash since 1995.

Regional Roundup

Compiled by Helen Donaldson

Far North

Four Rooks have been seen in scraggly *Eucalyptus* trees along Otaha Road, Takou Bay. They were seen for several months during 1998 and the landowner reported that he had started seeing them again recently. They appear to be displacing the resident magpies.

Three Cattle egrets have been seen on numerous occasions on the western side of the main road through Totara North. 37 were seen at Waipapakauri by Laurie and Alison Howell. However this tally was toppled in July when Sean and

I observed 111 in a paddock at Waiharara. They were feeding amongst cattle, six Pied Stilts, 18 White-faced Herons, numerous Pukeko, Paradise Shelducks and Black-backed Gulls.

56 Royal Spoonbills were seen at Unahi Bay by Laurie and Alison Howell. 114 spoonbills were seen in the *macrocarpa* trees at Unahi wharf in July. As the tide was falling the birds were flying to land in a paddock to the south. Surprisingly no bands were identified. A Common Tern was seen during a beach patrol at East Beach in May.

Banding of Black-backed Gull chicks was carried out at the Black Rocks by Isobella Godbert and her dedicated crew in early 1999. Access to the islands can be difficult, as you have to be able to anchor your boat and land on the island - an easterly swell can make this tricky! The birds (16 in total) were banded red-metal left, green right.

(Leigh Honnor)

Northland

The well-attended meetings of the Northland region reflect the interest and participation of our members, not to mention the monthly raffles and interesting speakers organised by our RR. At a recent meeting we saw slides of Kakerori (Rarotongan Flycatcher), an endangered species, found only on the island of Rarotonga.

The post-breeding count of 183 New Zealand Dotterels in March was carried out in and around the Whangarei area.

The annual Northland passerine banding scheme continues at the same sites mainly during the kiwifruit season. This year two Silvereyes were caught that had been banded in 1993, which makes them at least six years old.

An interesting sighting on 18 April at the Ruakaka river mouth was a Hudsonian Godwit amongst ten other godwits. Recently a flock of 100 Yellowhammers was seen close to Whangarei.

The monthly beach patrols on the Dargaville coast and the east coast between Waipu and One Tree Point continued as usual with an eager band of helpers. On the June Dargaville patrol an interesting variety of birds were found all in very good condition. These birds included White-headed Petrels, Fluttering Shearwaters, Cape Pigeons, Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, Thin-billed Prions, Common Diving Petrels and Antarctic Fulmars.

The national wader census on the Whangarei Harbour and the north Kaipara Harbour was held in June with some interesting results. Observations at Whangarei Harbour were 63 Royal Spoonbills (a new record number), 5 White Herons, 10 Cattle Egrets (not seen on the harbour for a long time) and 150 knots (an unusual number for mid-winter). 60 Cattle Egrets were seen on

the Ruawai flats, which is a good number for this area of the Kaipara.

A group of Northland members went up to the far north to help with their wader census. The first day, which was to have been at the Parengarenga Harbour, was cancelled because of very wet windy weather, but the Rangaunu Harbour and a couple of other areas around the Karikari Peninsula were done the following day.

To date, the weather has prevented the annual tree planting on Motukawanui Island (the largest of the Cavalli Islands). The Northland and Far North regions as well as Forest and Bird members help DoC with this venture. Hopefully the second date planned will be successful.

(Janet Snell)

Auckland

The past few meetings in Auckland have been varied and interesting. In May, Adrian Riegen gave some fascinating highlights of his recent trip to the Gulf of Carpentaria. At the June meeting Warwick Sandler gave a beautifully illustrated talk about prey items of the Miranda mudflats, and how each wader/shorebird species utilises them.

In July Isobel Castro (who has a number plate which says Dr Hihī) spoke to the meeting. Isobel is an interesting and impressive speaker. She talked about the Hihī as a threatened bird, and the reasons for its decline in numbers due to mammalian predators, habitat destruction and disease. She had studied reasons why translocations had not been successful, and came to the following conclusions: the procedure had not been correct, the food supply was not adequate, they suffered low reproduction rates, and were attacked by predators and disease. In August Andrew Styche talked about the distribution of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in New Zealand. This research is part of his PhD study.

Tristan Chan, at the University of Auckland, is writing an MA thesis on Brown Kiwi chicks in Trounson Park in Northland. The park is an example of a "mainland island" with mature kauri, and a podocarp forest surrounded by farmland. A population of about 200 kiwi was in decline until successful control of predators, using poison and trapping, was begun in 1995. The success of the control has been gauged by the survival of kiwi chicks. Tristan's study, which will take a year, is part of a three year project. Two other graduates will be looking at other aspects for their thesis, each taking a year. Tristan is looking at habitat preferences of kiwi chicks, and preferred foods. Birds were banded or carried transmitters. The results indicated a

preference for scrub and regenerating bush areas. River bank concentrations were hardest hit by predators. The diets from five of the seven chicks studied showed that most preferred beetle larvae.

Field trips in March included the NZ Dabchick census at Muriwai/South Kaipara Heads, when two White-winged Black Terns were seen at Ototoa and one at the Shelley Beach ponds.

The Auckland area flock counts of New Zealand Dotterels also in March were encouraging. Mangawhai Spit in 1998 numbered 114, this year (1999) 131. There has been an increase in the total for the area from 357 in 1998 to 412 in 1999. The Mangawhai total confirms that this site is the most important in the country for dotterels. A one year old chick banded in Shoal Bay was seen at Auckland Airport this autumn. These sightings are very valuable for our on-going study of juvenile survival and dispersal.

A trip to Tiritiri Matangi resulted in a very successful count. A juvenile Harrier was seen being harassed by a Tui - the young hawk died later.

A trip to Okoromai Bay resulted in recording 10 Kakariki, two Brown Teal and two Australasian Shovelers. Other OSNZ members had seen 30 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos at Paremuremo, and 10 at the Cascades in the Waitakeres.

At the end of June 54 Royal Spoonbills, five NZ Scaup, and seven NZ Dabchicks were seen at the Mangere Treatment Ponds. The number of dabchicks is unusually high. At Strakas Refuge three dabchicks were seen in June, and early in July five adult dabchicks were seen, with two chicks sitting on the back of one of the adults. The chicks were less than a week old. It is believed that it is probably about ten years since dabchicks were seen at Strakas Refuge.

Also in June, a report was received that a Nankeen Kestrel had been seen on Waiheke Island, with more sightings in July. This year there have been huge winter flocks (c. 200 birds) of Little Black Shags, in both the Manukau and Waitemata Harbours. Shaun Loewen, a recent arrival from America, saw a Chestnut Teal in July at the Waiwera Oxidation Ponds. A trip to Pollen Island to count Fernbirds was successful - 17 were either seen or heard.

The South Kaipara census on 12 June recorded (amongst many other species) 16 Grey Teal at Jordans Farm. Then at Mangawhai during the wader census on 19 June a pair of Fairy Terns were seen engaged in courtship flight and one bird was seen on the ground in almost

pristine breeding plumage. Also seen that day was a Black-billed Gull banded at the Papakanui Spit colony in January 1999.

In August two Black Stilts were seen at Hedleys: both birds were banded, one believed to date from 1982/83, the other possibly 1988, so both are quite old birds.

In 1997 Gavin and I moved from our central Auckland city townhouse to live in a house situated on the upper reaches of the estuary at Mangawhai. We knew very little about waders and seabirds, but with them coming right to our door we realised we should learn about them, so we joined OSNZ. It has been a good move and each day "our" estuary presents such interesting things to look at. As well as the birds at low tide, one morning as the tide was filling, gliding on its wings came a stingray. And through the summer Fairy Terns regularly visit to fish just across from our lawn. Paradise? Yes, we think so.

(Rae McGregor)

South Auckland

Attendances at the South Auckland meetings have been relatively good over the winter period. Visitors are always welcome to join in the discussions. Visitors to Auckland should remember that the meetings are only 20 minutes from the centre of Auckland city. So if you are ever up this way during the second Tuesday in the month, you are most welcome to join us.

The June meeting was addressed by Martin Bell, one of the curators at the Auckland Zoo. He gave an interesting talk on the breeding work for rare and endangered birds carried out at the zoo. This was based around the recent experiences with the two Fairy Tern chicks which had involved Tony Habraken in several hours of catching live fish for their food.

The RR was away on a well-earned holiday during the July meeting. It would appear that the meeting continued with an empty chair at the front which is possibly one of the reasons the region has not made a nomination for RR for the coming year. They decided that the empty chair was just as efficient as the RR! However the guest speaker was Simon Fordham who showed an interesting series of slides relating to a visit to the Daintree Forest in Queensland.

In August Warrick Sandler gave us a very interesting illustrated talk on the life in the Miranda mud. This was based on a year's work under a Royal Society

study grant. This gave us a very good insight into the types of food that the wading birds at Miranda (and presumably in other estuarine areas) are utilising and their preferred feeding areas.

During June the normal winter census work was completed on the Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames. In the usual tradition, the day for the Manukau Harbour census was very wet and windy which made conditions most unpleasant. Unfortunately it was a day when there were two new members, and their enthusiasm for counting 5,000 birds quickly waned as the rain continued to fall. However, as they have turned up at following events, the experience was not too off-putting.

The numbers were in line with previous years in the Manukau Harbour but the numbers of SIPOs were approximately 7,000 birds down on last year in the Firth of Thames. Presumably these were missed in the paddocks somewhere on the Hauraki Plains.

There have been several sightings of the flock of Galahs at Mangatawhiri. These are normally in that area through the winter period but disappear during the spring and summer.

The visit to Kidds shellbanks at Karaka on 15 August with David Medway showed that he had brought some Taranaki weather with him. It turned into a wet miserable day huddled behind the bank, but there was a lively discussion on the welfare of OSNZ. There were also sightings of a Far-eastern Curlew, a White-winged Black Tern in partial breeding plumage, seven Red-necked Stints, a Grey-tailed Tattler, a Little Tern and six flagged Knots (two yellow, two orange and two white). So it turned out to be a reasonable day after all.

We are now waiting for the return of the Arctic migrants in the middle of September.

(David Lawrie)

Waikato

Our May evening meeting introduced us to the ins and outs of the Fish & Game Council via Phil Teal. The talk concentrated on the management of the game bird species in New Zealand. The June evening meeting saw the return of Kerry Oates, this time outlining the in-depth study of the Blue Ducks of the Volcanic Plateau. It was illustrated with some excellent slides of the birds in their natural habitat, which is swiftly being degraded.

Three members from Waikato attended the National AGM in

Canterbury, and we all enjoyed the time immensely – a recommended activity!

July's field trip was another weather-affected harbour census of Kawhia/Aotea/Raglan. Kawhia produced an ever-rising number of spoonbills (55 versus two the same time 10 years ago). Also there was a Whimbrel and a Little Egret. Aotea had 350 Banded and eight NZ Dotterels. Raglan had 54 Little Black Shags and a colour-banded SIPO.

Our monthly lake surveys were boosted by the addition of Te Koutu (Cambridge Lake) to the schedule in July. This lake has good riparian margins for breeding waterfowl. So far there has been nothing startlingly rare for this lake or the other lakes surveyed in this quarter.

At our July meeting, local member Anna Reynolds gave an exciting talk on the weed control stint she and Mike Ogle did on the Kermadec Islands. Based on Raoul Island, she illustrated the talk with great slides, with some supplemented by Hugh Clifford. It was interesting to see fruit trees on the weed list!

On 18 August, we received an invigorating sound and light show on waders, migration and census techniques from Dick Veitch. His emphasis on efficient counting skills left us sharpening our pencils and polishing the mould off our rain-affected binoculars. Trends (either up or down) in wader population numbers in NZ were shown in a clear and concise manner – a great motivating talk!

The 5-minute bird counts on Mt Kakepuku, Te Awamutu, demonstrate the success of the North Island Robin transfer from Pureora in June. Our 25 July count revealed plenty of beautiful singing and, curiously, lots more Tomtit sightings than usual – are they being chased by the robins? A NZ Falcon gliding by below eye-level close-up was also unusual.

Beach patrols have resulted in more than 200 birds being identified from most of our beaches – a great effort. Finds are mainly Fairy and Thin-billed Prions, Kerguelen and Blue Petrels, Fluttering Shearwaters and Antarctic Fulmars. One stand-out rarity has turned up – Hugh Clifford picked up a Grey Petrel. I can find no mention of these in the local records since the start of them in the 1970s.

Other sightings include a dabchick in July and September at the Raglan sewage ponds, 51 Cattle Egrets on 4 July at Lake Ngaroto and 270 at Rangiriri on 28 July. Several were also seen recently North of Huntly township.

(Paul Cuming)

Volcanic Plateau

The topic of our June meeting in Rotorua was kiwi survival in Tongariro Forest. Ross Martin is completing his Masters thesis while working part-time for DoC Whakapapa. He is studying, through radio telemetry, the time/activity budgets of stoats both in captivity and in the wild, trying to analyse when stoats are most likely to predate and when predator control would be most effective.

We were treated to a wonderful visual display of kiwi ecology and the entire Operation Nest Egg process; from capture of wild adults for fitting of transmitters to nest location, egg removal, incubation and chick-raising at Rainbow Springs, to re-release of sub adults into the wild. Ross was assisted in his talk by Deidre Vercoe of Rainbow Springs, who took us through the incubation and chick-raising roles that Rainbow Springs plays in the Nest Egg process. It was an excellent opportunity for our members to learn about a local project of such national significance.

Our region completed its winter wetland surveys over the ten day period 12-22 June. Most sites recorded fewer Mallards than usual, with higher numbers of scaup, shovelers and dabchicks. Of particular interest were eight dabchicks and a Grey Teal at the Raetihi oxidation ponds on 14 June.

Eastern Rosellas have been seen in the southern beech forests of Mt Ruapehu near Ohakune during May, which may cause competition problems for Kakariki in the area.

New Zealand Falcons have been seen in town in both Ohakune and Turangi in June and appear to be regular winter visitors to urban areas.

Our region will resume its Banded Dotterel survey from November to March, and we hope to start colour banding dotterels on the Rangipo Desert in November, so watch *OSNZ News* for requests of band sightings in your region in late summer as birds disperse from their breeding grounds.

(Kerry Oates)

Taranaki

An excellent number of bird species were reported at the June meeting. This included 67 Banded Dotterels at the Waiongana River estuary, three New Zealand Dotterels at the Pungareere stream and three Black-fronted Dotterels at a lake in south Taranaki. In Egmont National Park several combined flocks of Silvereyes and Whiteheads were observed feeding and moving through the bush.

The monthly trip in June was to the Surrey Hill Road track on the Kaitake ranges. All the common bush birds were seen in good numbers. Again it was evident that the native trees and shrubs have had an excellent fruiting season; in particular the pepper tree *Pseudowintera axillaris* was laden with red berries.

Our RR gave a report on the AGM at the July meeting and informed members that 2003 may be a busy year for us!

The bands on a Black Stilt observed earlier in the year do not tally with DoC's Twizel records, so this remains a mystery bird. We are still observing large numbers of Banded Dotterels in coastal areas, including New Plymouth airport. An unusually dark coloured New Zealand Falcon was observed at Mokau and one other was seen in the city area of the Te Henui Walkway. Other sightings around the coast include Black-fronted Dotterels, Reef Herons, Royal Spoonbills, Variable Oystercatchers and one White-winged Black Tern.

The July outing was to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust garden next to Egmont National Park. Pleasing numbers of native birds were seen, especially Tui.

A kiwi tape was played on a combined Forest and Bird/DoC trip to the North Egmont area in July. Three male kiwi answered from a distance and one female called very close to the track and the listeners.

Interesting records from our August meeting were: two Rooks in the city area, Fantails in great numbers and an Antarctic Fulmar flying just off the coast. Coincidentally, an Antarctic Fulmar was included in a beach wreck report, also two Kerguelen Petrels, a Shy Mollymawk, some prions and Fluttering Shearwaters. The meeting concluded with an illustrated talk on Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls. Our thanks to Bill van Gorkom for his research and presentation, which generated much discussion.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Wanganui

The Wanganui evening meetings continue on a regular basis. In April Tim Holmes, head of DoC Wanganui, gave an interesting talk on his work in Namibia. Vonnie Cave talked in May about her trip to the subantarctic islands. This was fascinating and gave an insight to the harsh conditions that birds and plant life contend with there. In June Ralph Powlesland shared his study of the shags in the Wellington area, and in July Jim Campbell talked about the birds of Raoul Island and Chatham Island.

Early in June members travelled to Manawatu Estuary and observed 53 Royal Spoonbills, Grey Teal, Wrybills, Bar-tailed Godwits, New Zealand Shovelers, SIPOs, and Pectoral Sandpipers. On 27 June we counted Australian Coots - there were 65 on Virginia Lake and 47 on Westmere Lake. At Grassmere Lake on 18 July two members observed four Black Swans, four NZ Scaup, four Shovelers and two White-faced Herons. On the same day at Pauri Lake 56 Black Swans, three Black Shags fishing, three Shovelers, two domestic geese and a Canada Goose were seen.

There have been a number of sightings of New Zealand Falcon in our region, singly and in pairs. We hope to pinpoint a nest site. Other birds seen in the area include two Little Egrets, a White Heron, shags nesting at Virginia Lake, Yellowhammers chasing Blackbirds and Tui bathing in the trees after a heavy rain shower.

(Tom Teasdale)

Manawatu

Our evening meetings continue on a regular basis, and have been reasonably well supported. Recently we were given a very interesting talk and slide show by Ralph Powlesland. The effects of 1080 poison drops on the North Island Robin population in the Pureora forest and photographs showing the differences in robins on the three islands of New Zealand was very informative.

Beach patrols on Hokio, Waikawa and Ohau beaches have not produced a single wreck in recent months. On checking out a report of an albatross on Okaki Beach earlier this month, I picked up a recently wrecked Antarctic Fulmar and an Australasian Gannet.

At the Manawatu Estuary there have been some very unusual wintering birds: a single Pacific Golden Plover in perfect breeding plumage stayed behind through until early August at least and is the first ever to have done so. A Little Tern has also overwintered for the first time and a Red-necked Stint has remained (there were two last winter). The other highlight was a Little Egret for a week or so from the end of June - the first for Manawatu since 1992. Duck numbers were well down on recent years, but a flock of nine Black-fronted Dotterels through June and July was a record number for this species, which is rarely reported at the estuary.

In Feilding, presumably the same New Zealand Falcon was seen twice, in June and July. No Cattle Egrets have

been seen in the region, although a flock of up to 40 has been just to the north, at the Wangaehu River, near Wanganui.

(Brian Tyler)

Gisborne/Wairoa

An excellent wader spot has been located by Dave and Marg Fraser at Mahia, between the Cactus and White Rock. A small bay on the platform reef offers good low tide feeding where there is shallow water over a mix of mud, sand, rock and eel grass. Eleven species of waders have been seen there in July - an extraordinary number for this area in midwinter. Topping the list are two Mongolian Dotterels in breeding plumage, two tattlers, a New Zealand Dotterel and 30-40 Banded Dotterels which seem to have a loose liaison with

the Mongolian Dotterels. Other waders seen are 100+ Variable Oystercatchers, two South Island Pied Oystercatchers, five Turnstones, numerous Pied Stilts, Bar-tailed Godwits and Spur-winged Plovers and a Whimbrel further around near White Rock.

The count of 66 Wrybills at Muriwai was about double the usual winter count, but Oystercatcher numbers were well down.

On 19 June there were many flocks of Yellowhammers and House Sparrows on the Poverty Bay flats. One flock of sparrows, numbering over 2,000, was feeding on corn stubble at Muriwai.

The following is the summary of the winter wader survey 19-20 June 1999.

(Geoff Foreman)

	Muriwai Waioaoa	Mahia	Whakaki- Korito	Wairoa	Total
Pied Oystercatcher	16	2	-	-	18
Variable Oystercatcher	8	58	-	2	68
Pied Stilt	124	85	506	26	741
Banded Dotterel	13	4	-	6	23
Wrybill	66	-	-	-	66
Spur-winged Plover	35	2	79	2	118
Bar-tailed Godwit	48	9	-	3	60

Hawkes Bay

In recent weeks the most interesting birds have been the various "white birds". The Royal Spoonbills at the Ahuriri Estuary have reduced to c.50 (July) from their high of c.73 in April. Whereas in most years they can often be easily seen between the bridges during the shooting season and upstream at other times, this year they have been below the Embankment Bridge most times. Even though they are easily seen, it doesn't necessarily make counting any easier!

A single bird has been observed at different locations between Clive and Haumoana Lagoon. Two White Herons and one Little Egret have been present at Clive during the winter. 16 Cattle Egrets have been seen in the Ferry Road area of Clive, but later disappeared, then ten were seen in early July at Swamp Road near Puketapu.

During the shooting season there were c.60 Grey Teal and c.1,000 Shovelers on Westshore Lagoon, the Grey Teal numbers down considerably from most years. 26 NZ Dabchicks were also present on 11 July. Perhaps with the reduction in weed we may even return to the days when a handful of Scaup lived there!

Black-fronted Terns arrived for the winter as usual, but in lower numbers, and seemingly restricting themselves to the Clive Wetlands and the Tukituki Estuary. They don't appear to favour the Napier South foreshore this year. Three White-winged Black Terns were noted at Waitangi in May. The Spotted Shags are building up again, with c.80 seen on the Clive Outfall on 14 July.

A most interesting record for the Ahuriri area is for an unknown number of Marsh Crakes seen and heard by Hans Rook of DoC in one of the wetlands beyond the airport. He attracted them with a quail caller!

The Porangahau winter census turned up 16 SIPOs, 18 Variable Oystercatchers, 93 Banded Dotterels, 84 Wrybills, 128 Bar-tailed Godwits and three Red-necked Stints.

The mild winter weather has had birds confused. Kath Todd reports a Song Thrush building a nest at Frimley in Hastings on 8 June, and another thrush feeding young at Tomoana on 10 July.

(Wayne Twydale)

Wairarapa

What a marvellous AGM! The Wairarapa contingent travelled by minibus and returned via Karamea. A week in this region is not enough. An area steeped in history and bird species including New Zealand Falcons, Blue Ducks, South Island Robins, Kea, and Australasian Bitterns. The historic highlight would have to be the Denniston settlement and coalmine, which is a cold, bleak, desolate area, where the former residents would have had to be extremely hardy to survive the environment and the back-breaking existence.

The Cattle Egrets are back in the Wairarapa and with them a couple of unanswered questions. One of our members has been studying a flock near Carterton, trying to discover what they are feeding on and why they seem to prefer the company of one herd of cows and not other herds nearby.

Andrew Nelson and Helen Gummer, both staff members at the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre, each gave us presentations. Andrew spoke of his work on Chatham Island and Helen spoke on the release of Campbell Island Teal on Codfish Island. Both of these talks and slide shows were appreciated by our group and created a lot of discussion. Our third guest speaker was Roy Farman, a Masterton vet, who talked about treating birds in his surgery and how to handle injured birds. We are all very appreciative of our speakers, who give their time and a lot of effort.

(Miles King)

Wellington

On this year's second sortie across Cook Strait, on 21 March, seven members took the fast ferry from Mana to Queen Charlotte Sound, for a day's viewing of dolphins, King Shags (at White Rocks), and Bellbirds, Saddlebacks and New Zealand Robins, especially, on Motuara Island.

After the branch AGM, Colin du Plessis showed slides of some of the two million King Penguins on Marion Island, which is situated south of Capetown at latitude 45 degrees south. Cats have recently been eradicated there, leading to an extension of the breeding season, possibly to 14 months.

What Makes a Bird? was the question asked of Ben Bell in April. This took us back to the palaeontological evidence of the development of birds, including recent Chinese discoveries, and consideration of the relationship between birds and dinosaurs.

In May Graeme Taylor showed a video of his recent trip to British Columbia. This provided extensive coverage of birds as well as being of more general interest.

From Ben Bell's fossils we moved to Mike Dickison's Ecology of Extinct Birds. In June Mike asked members What is the "real" New Zealand environment? The pre-human ecology? In the light of the extinction of ducks, Adzebills, wrens, birds of prey etc., can our efforts in conservation benefit from a knowledge of "palaeoecology"?

The importance of human intervention in those efforts is apparent in the present enthusiasm for "mainland islands". In July, Alan Saunders, technical coordinator of mainland islands for DoC, discussed the two main topics of this intervention: translocation of endangered species, and eradication of pests to restore a damaged ecosystem.

From a more positive point of view, listening to Chris Robertson at the August meeting we felt invited to fly free with the albatross. Here scientific intervention consists of attaching radio monitors and mini-computers, and what marvellous information is now becoming available! After two years of tracking, the Chatham Island Mollymawk has been shown to have limited distribution during the breeding season. "Civil service" birds, feeding daily from nine to five, said Chris, in contrast to the great Diomedidae?, the Wandering, the Northern Royal, and the Antipodean Albatrosses, whose non-breeding range especially, and incredible flight speed, are being revealed for the first time. Some Royals have been estimated to fly down-wind at speeds up to 90 to 100 kph "for days and days".

After two quarterly counts by members in the first survey of Kapiti Island since the elimination of rats, Colin Miskelly reported significant increases in numbers of Bellbirds, Kakariki, NZ Robins and Saddlebacks, and significant decreases in Silvereyes, Tomtits and Tui.

Robins on Mana Island were banded by a team led by Geoff de Lisle on Queen's Birthday weekend.

The monthly survey of Wellington Harbour is now into its second year, thanks to the commitment of about 25 members. Compared with earlier surveys, evidence indicates greater numbers of Variable Oystercatchers and Little Shags, a decrease in Black Shags and no significant change of White-fronted Terns or Fluttering Shearwaters. There are possibly fewer Reef Herons. Red-billed Gulls have experienced a big decline, as have Black-backed Gulls over the decades covered by the three surveys. The closing of the meat-

processing and other harbour-side plants has reduced the variety of species also.

Beach patrols continue, regularly at Petone and 13 km from Paraparaumu along to Te Horo stream, and sporadically elsewhere. Recoveries March through until June were scanty in species and numbers, but July saw an upsurge with 13 species including the rarely-seen Antarctic Fulmar and ranging from giant petrel to Common Diving Petrel. The "big prize" was a banded Common Diving Petrel, one of the pioneer fledglings in DoC's programme, initiated in 1997, to establish this species on Mana Island.

Live sightings of special interest in July were a New Zealand Falcon at Melling and 100+ Cape Pigeons at the sewerage outfall near Pencarrow.

Some members are helping to organise a survey of birds in a forested block (part of the East Harbour Regional Park) which neighbours are proposing for development as a "mainland island".

Planning has commenced for a week-long field trip to Pureora and Whirinaki Forest Parks, where members hope to see, and hear, the difference between an area where predators are controlled by DoC and one where there is no control.

(Rod Orange)

Canterbury

The evening talks have taken the branch members to some interesting islands this last couple of months. In June Ron Nilsson shared some slides and stories about Codfish Island. The start of Codfish as a conservation concern began with a young Ron Nilsson persuading DoC that the island had promise as somewhere to preserve species.

Eradication of Weka and possums involved cutting a network of tracks on some pretty uneven terrain including cliff faces. Successful eradication of both pests has meant a comeback for nesting seabirds and a regrowth of forest and scrub from a pretty degraded state. The lack of these pests meant there was a refuge island for Kakapo when cats were decimating them on Stewart Island. Due to strong tidal currents, pests are unlikely to invade by swimming the channel between Codfish and Stewart Island.

In July Jonathan Banks showed some wonderful slides from a recent trip to the Snarcs Islands with Paul Sagar and Don Badden, to continue Paul's study of the mollymawks. The impressions

were of a very noisy island, filled with a variety of birds, including millions of petrels and thousands of penguins and mollymawks. Walking sounded challenging at times, with seals and sea-lions well distributed around the island, as well as vegetation to duck and dive through, and burrows to negotiate.

June saw the annual winter wader count. Not many birds were seen, and only a few brave hardy souls ventured out. Rain on the original Sunday meant it was spread over two weekends. No rarities were found. Unusual birds included overwintering Wrybills - one at Ashley and eight on the Avon-Heathcote. 73 Variable Oystercatchers on the Avon-Heathcote was a very good count, and the hybrid oystercatcher at the Ashley was interesting. It was a good effort from those who helped, as usual, and all help was very much appreciated (Nick is hoping someone else will organise the next one!). The best bird for him was not a wader, but a Spotless Crake at Hart's Creek.

In July the annual Ashburton Lakes trip took place. The weather was not as good as recent years, with cloud and drizzle but thankfully no wind. An eight inch dump of snow previously had almost melted away. There was more ice cover than last year and so birds were concentrated into smaller areas. One group (the four who went to Lake Emily and the Maori Lakes) were lucky enough to see a New Zealand Falcon down to ten metres as it flew past them and landed on the ground, almost too close to focus on. They did not see many wildfowl or grebes, which were more numerous on the other lakes.

In August, 13 members and friends went up to Kaikoura for the weekend. Top of the agenda were seabirds, and notable were superb views of two Southern Royal Albatrosses battling to keep the squabbling Cape Pigeons and assorted other mollymawks at bay from the food put out for them at only an arm's length from the stern of the boat. Other highlights were excellent views of Fairy Prions in flight and on the surface close to the vessel, Antarctic Fulmars and, at the outset, very confiding Hutton's Shearwaters resting on the water. On Sunday Kowhai Bush didn't disappoint, with all of the resident bush birds being located, including Rifleman and New Zealand Robins.

Wading birds are thin on the ground at the moment. One Wrybill at the Ashley mid-July, three Turnstones at Lake Ellesmere (Embankment Road). The lake was very high. The boardwalk at Hart's Creek was under a minimum of four inches and a maximum of ten inches of water, making getting to the hide a little more interesting than usual. At least one White-winged Black Tern

was at Coopers Lagoon (with up to six there in August).

Nick Allen counted 98 Australasian Crested Grebes on Lake Forsyth on Saturday, and four from Drain Road on Lake Ellesmere on Sunday. Of the latter, three flew off, not something that you often see grebes do. Scott Butcher's count of 112 about a fortnight earlier was even better. The count on Lake Forsyth the day after the Ashburton count was 76, so who knows how many were hiding unseen on Lake Ellesmere!

Colin Hill had about 50 New Zealand Scaup on Lake Ellesmere near his place the other day - most unusual, and possibly a continuation of the regional increase.

(Nick Allen & Frances Schmechel)

WHAT'S ON!

Auckland



1-3 October weekend at Pureora to visit Kaka study site, Mike Graham ph (09) 817-5537

5 October evening meeting, encounters with Kiwi. Auckland College of Education (first building on left, Gate 1). Gwenda Pulham.

9 October Muriwai Beach Patrol, John Simmons ph (09) 828-8642

22-25 October Labour Weekend, Tawharanui survey, George Schischka ph (09) 827-3728

2 November evening meeting, Morepork diet

6 November Muriwai Beach Patrol, John Simmons ph (09) 828-8642

13 November Mangawhai Wader Census, Mary McKenzie ph (09) 423-7016

19-21 November Tiri Survey, Mike Graham ph (09) 817-5537

27 November Kaipara Wader Census, Adrian Reigen ph (09) 814-9741

28 November Manukau Wader Census, Connie Schischka ph (09) 827-3728

7 December evening meeting, re-establishing seabird colonies and introducing the new bird mapping scheme

11 January summer picnic at Tahuna Torea Nature Reserve 6.30pm, Michael Taylor ph (09) 524-9234

1 February evening meeting, sketches in the Sub-antarctic

5 February Muriwai Beach Patrol, John Simmons ph (09) 828-8642

South Auckland



12 October evening meeting, travels to India and Nepal

17 October wader watching with the Miranda Naturalists Trust

31 October beach patrol, Rob Wheeler ph (09) 299-7069

9 November evening meeting, skinks and geckos

14 November Firth of Thames Census, Tony Habraken (09) 238-5284

21 November beach patrol, Rob Wheeler ph (09) 299-7069

28 November Manukau Harbour Census, Tony Habraken (09) 238-5284

5 December summer BBQ, Bill and Barbara Ormonds ph (09) 238-6438



Waikato

Evening meetings occur on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, bar January. Held at 3rd floor, Department of Conservation, London Street, Hamilton at 7.30PM sharp. Any enquiries, call Hugh Clifford 07 8553751

15 Sep - evening meeting, Coastal environment threats & solutions

18-10 Sep - Rangitoto Range trip

17 Oct - Spring migration day - Miranda Shorebird Centre

20 Oct - evening meeting, topic TBA

7 Nov - Tiritiri Matangi island trip

17 Nov - evening meeting - Blue Penguin studies

27 Nov - harbours census

8 Dec - pot-luck Xmas dinner 6 pm at DoC

10 Oct/ 14 Nov/ 12 Dec - Hamilton Lakes Census

16 Oct/ 21 Nov/ 19 Dec - Cambridge Lake Census.

Hamilton lakes monthly counts - Rotorua/Hamilton Barry Friend (07) 8436729, Rotokaeo/Forest Brian Challinor (07) 8552561

Te Koutu/Cambridge Hugh Clifford (07) 8553751

Waikato beach patrols, 5-minute bird counts and mist-netting, Paul Cuming (07) 8298215

Volcanic Plateau



27 November Banded Dotterel Survey at Sulphur Bay, Lake Rotokawa, Scoria Flat, and Tukino Road

4-5 December Banded Dotterel banding at Tukino Road and Lake Rotokawa

6 December evening meeting in Rotorua, Kerry Oates ph (06) 385-9505

Hawkes Bay

Labour Weekend Lake Waikaremoana

6 November Census

7 November Porangahau Census

12 December meeting/BBQ

Wairarapa

13 October evening meeting, habitat and distribution of Scaup, Janet Dennison

17 October field trip to Homewood Station to see cliff-nesting seabirds, Colin Scadden (06) 378-6423

17 November evening meeting, plumage and recognition of Scaup, Barbara Lovatt

20 November field trip to eastern shore, Lake Wairarapa, Brian Boeson ph (06) 304-9074

4 December pot luck tea, Barbara Lovatt

Wellington

November field trip to Manawatu Estuary

Beach patrols, Jean Luke ph (04) 293-5601

Harbour survey, 2nd Sunday of the month, 1-3pm, Ros Batchelor ph (04) 479-4095

Canterbury

23-25 October long weekend at Ki-Wainono Lagoon and South Canterbury, Sheila Petch ph (03) 348-1889

1 November evening meeting, Science Alive, Moorehouse Ave. Kiwi at Willowbank, Nick Allen ph (03) 312-7183

20 November Hinewai Reserve (near Akaroa), Sheila Petch ph (03) 348-1889

29 November evening meeting, predator control in the Waitaki Basin, Nick Allen ph (03) 312-7183

11-12 December summer wader count at Lake Ellesmere, Ron Nilsson ph (03) 338-8936

Otago

3 October Heywood Point Bush, Louise Foord ph (03) 467 5041

22-25 October long weekend at Ki-Wainono Lagoon and South Canterbury, Louise Foord ph (03) 467 5041

27 October evening meeting, Otago Art Society building, 8.00 pm.. Birds of Namibia.

21 November summer wader count, Ken Gager ph (03) 487 6670

Western Australia Tour

I am hoping to organise a small group (10-12) to go to south-western Australia in Sept. 2000. The theme will be birds and botany and the planned dates are Sept. 9th-29th, 2000.

The tour will be professionally organised and approximate cost is expected to be around \$2,500 (ex Perth). If you are interested in joining us, please contact:

BETTY SEDDON

11 Grey Street

Cambridge

Phone (07) 827 7761

DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE IS 10 NOVEMBER