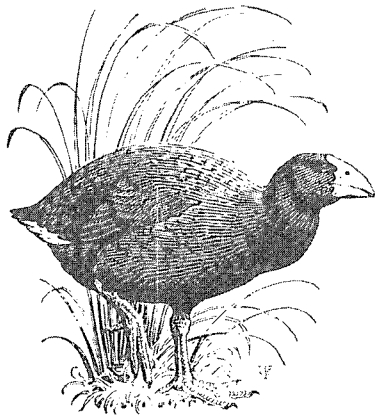


# Southern Bird

No. 5 March 2001. • ISSN 1175-1916





# Southern Bird

No. 5 March 2001. • ISSN 1175-1916

## Quotation

*"We may infer...what havoc the introduction of any new beast of prey must cause in a country, before the instincts of the aborigines become adapted to the stranger's craft or power"*

CHARLES DARWIN

## Contents

	Page
Cooperative breeding	4
Chestnut Teal	7
Atlas update	8
Regional roundup	11
What's On	15

## Cover Photo

### Front Cover

*Kaka were once so widespread and common in New Zealand that they were shot for food. Now they are only commonly found in mustelid-free offshore islands, such as Kapiti, where the North Island Kaka on the front cover was photographed by Hugh Clifford.*

## Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand. Email [osnz1@ibm.net](mailto:osnz1@ibm.net).

Edited by Tony Crocker, 118 Cones Road, Ashley, RD2 Rangiora. Tel (03) 313 4995, fax (03) 364 2057, email [t.crocker@comt.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:t.crocker@comt.canterbury.ac.nz)

We welcome advertising enquiries.

## Southland Bird Week

Unfortunately we didn't get enough people to go ahead with the planned Bird Study Week in January but I invited those still interested to stay for a week and have a birding tour of Southland. We had five people for the week and four others who came for a day or two. In that time we covered 1,200 km, did 80 atlas squares and rounded up 72 species. The programme was:

➤ **Day 1** We found several pairs of Black-fronted Dotterels in a 5 km stretch of the Aparima River above Otautau. It is some years since they have been surveyed. We noted their tiny footprints in several places around the edge of muddy backwaters. There was a large flock of Black-billed Gulls 1 km above Otautau. This was a roost rather than a nesting site and it included one bird banded by us at Centre Bush a few weeks before.

There was an afternoon walk along the stretch of Te Waewae Bay from Monkey Island to Orepuki, and a visit to Lake George. On an evening beach patrol on Oreti Beach there was a Hector's Dolphin in the surf and a spectacular sunset.

➤ **Day two** We drove to Borland Lodge via Wrey's Bush and Ohai, stopping at the Clifden Bridge for lunch. We got to Borland Saddle and climbed to the Mount Burns tarns, then did the Borland Nature Walk and Lookout Point Walk at Lake Monowai. A Long-tailed Cuckoo swooped along the road as we drove to the saddle.

➤ **Day three** After a night at Borland Lodge we headed to Milford Sound Lodge stopping at Redcliff Wetland, Manapouri, the Kepler Track, Te Anau, Lake Gunn and Homer Tunnel. There was a large concentration of Paradise Shelducks at Redcliff but not much else. It was nice to see a falcon at Monowai perched near Pearl Harbour. No grebes showed themselves at Te Anau Downs and there were very few birds at Lake Gunn. No Yellowheads at all unfortunately and only a couple of NZ Robins. We didn't see the Rock Wrens at Homer Tunnel but there were seven Kea there. The wrens are sometimes visible on the nature walk at the tunnel. An evening stroll around Milford collected a few more species.

➤ **Day four** We returned to Invercargill stopping at Homer Tunnel, the Divide, Lake Gunn, the Te Anau Wildlife Park and Dunrobin. There were several Kaka at the Divide but we didn't manage a single Yellowhead the whole trip. They have been hard-hit by rats and stoats this year. We saw a juvenile Shining Cuckoo being fed by a Grey Warbler at Te Anau.

➤ **Day five** We paid a visit to Tiwai Spit which had several hundred Black-backed Gulls nesting and a single pair of Caspian Terns. There were several Banded Dotterel chicks.

Most of the party walked to Cow Island where they saw four New Zealand Dotterels, then continued for 8 km around the edge of Awarua Bay to the main roost at the eastern end. The totals for the roosts were Lesser Knot - 50, SIPO - 300, Turnstone - 100, black (Variable) oystercatcher - 12, Red-necked Stint - 68, Bar tailed Godwit - 800, Banded Dotterel - 30, Pacific Golden Plover - 17. There was also a distant sandpiper of some sort and a large dotterel, about the size of a NZ Dotterel but very black through the eye and with a red patch at the top of the chest. This is probably a Large Sand Dotterel in breeding gear, one of our rarer migrant waders.

➤ **Day six** Our only damp day didn't hold us back. We checked Waituna Lagoon which was blocked and flooded and stopped at Fortrose to see the estuary birds. We called at Waipapa Point, Waipohatu River, Haldane Harbour, Curio Bay and Waikawa.

The week was most pleasant. We were greatly assisted by Stuart Nicholson's GPS device which pinpointed the square boundaries. He was kept busy recording the species as they were called out along with cries of 'more air.'

The only note of dissent was from the shorter, and therefore wetter, members of the party who questioned the definition of a 'knee-deep' river.

LLOYD ESLER

## Scientific Day – 2001 AGM Call for Papers

Kerry Oates and I are organising the AGM's Scientific Day as part of the AGM weekend for 2001 in Rotorua over Queen's birthday weekend. We are seeking about 10-12 spoken papers of 20 minutes duration and as many posters that people may wish to offer. Anyone who wishes to present a paper or a poster are asked to contact me at 24 Sloane Avenue, Rotorua, ph. 07-347 7134 (after hours) or email me at [kowen@doc.govt.nz](mailto:kowen@doc.govt.nz) or ph. 07-349 7435 at work.

KEITH OWEN





## Waikato's keen young bloke!

Newly appointed Waikato RR, Paul Cumming, recently celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, and in so doing is one of the youngest, if not the youngest person to hold that office. Having joined OSNZ in November 1985, and been an active Waikato member ever since, Paul brings with him 16 years of learning and experience. He has attended OSNZ field courses at Farewell Spit in 1987-88, Ward in 1996, Kaipara in 1997 and was a participant in the first Miranda field course in 1999.

Paul worked with the "Bell-birders" during the transfer and feeding of Fluttering Shearwater chicks from Long Is to Maud Island in the Marlborough sounds in 1992-93, and has been an active participant in the 10 years of the Waikato Grey-faced Petrel project in the Bay of Plenty. For the past 10 years, Paul has been responsible for collating the beach patrol records for the Waikato region. He initiated five minute bird-counts on Mt Karioi, and more recently on Mt Kakepuku, after the removal of possums from both places.

Paul was a willing volunteer to feed and train North Island Robins in Pureora Forest when a transfer of some 30 birds to Kakepuku was planned. As a trained librarian, currently working at the Hamilton City Public Library, Paul was responsible for organising the library

23rd International Congress ~ Beijing, China, 11-17 August 2002

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions on any topic in all fields of ornithology are called for. Contributors should first submit an abstract to the Congress Secretariat for review before 1 July 2001. A Review Panel of the Scientific Program Committee will select some of these submissions for oral presentations. When submitting their abstracts, authors need to indicate which of the following subject categories fits their abstract:

- A. BEHAVIOUR AND BIOACOUSTICS
- B. ECOLOGY
- C. REPRODUCTION
- D. POPULATION BIOLOGY
- E. MIGRATION AND ORIENTATION
- F. NUTRITION, FORAGING AND ENERGETICS
- G. PHYSIOLOGY AND SENSES
- H. MORPHOLOGY AND ONTOGENY
- I. SYSTEMATICS, BIOGEOGRAPHY, PALEONTOLOGY
- J. CONSERVATION AND HUMAN-RELATED TOPICS
- K. MISCELLANEOUS

Any group or individual may also submit a topic for round-table discussion, with a statement of the purpose and a list of issues to be discussed. This statement, in the form of an abstract, should be submitted to the Congress Secretariat before 1 July 2001. The organizers will have to write a 2-3 page report on the goals and results of their round-table discussion, which will be published in the congress proceedings.

Further information, including full details on abstract submission, are available from the Congress website at [www.ioc.org.cn](http://www.ioc.org.cn).

The second circular will come out in late October 2001. Those who are not authors but wish to attend the Congress can visit the Congress web site to download the circular when it is available, or send a request mail or email to the Congress Secretariat for information.

collection at the Miranda Shorebird Centre, where he also served as a council member for three years. His private library of bird books would be the envy of many.

He has written articles for *OSNZ News*, and collated and recently wrote up the Waikato data for ten years of west coast harbour censuses. In 1994 he took on the task of minding the OSNZ slides, building the collection up, and attending to requests from members. As if this was not enough, he has also taken on the job of holding and distributing back numbers of *Notornis* and now he has agreed to become the Waikato RR!

Many in the Waikato have watched Paul grow, and have fostered his keen interest in birds and the Society, as have many members elsewhere in the country. We know Paul as a keen and enthusiastic birder and member, and trust he will find rich reward in the position he has accepted. Well done Paul!!

BEV WOOLLEY

## Matiu/Somes Island surveys

Now is your chance to spend some time on this jewel on Wellington Harbour. With full support from DoC we are planning a series of quarterly counts on this lovely island. We are able to stay overnight, and DoC will provide boat transport to survey the cliffs and rocky outcrops. All we need is someone to coordinate this scheme!!

Please contact

Ros Batcheler

04-479 4095

email:

[batcheler@paradise.net.nz](mailto:batcheler@paradise.net.nz)

## Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 2001

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 2001. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary.

All nominations will be considered by the Awards Committee and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting.

A full summary of OSNZ award procedures was published in *OSNZ News* 58 (March 1991).

CHRISTINE REED  
Hon. Secretary

## New Members

A warm welcome to all our new members for the year 2001.

Bob Image, Mary Bakker-Gelsing, Matthew McDougall, David Wright, Kate Alexander, Zoe Dewson, Hertha James, Alex James Also re-joining again after being overseas - Paul Schofield & Chris Thompson

HAZEL HARTY  
Membership Secretary



# Cooperative Breeding in New Zealand Birds

Contributed by Dr Ian G. Jamieson

Cooperative breeding describes the unusual reproductive system in birds in which one or more members of a social group provides care for young that are not their own offspring. The care-givers can be either non-breeding 'helpers', which are normally offspring from previous broods, or co-breeders that share reproduction with other group members of the same sex. Thus a cooperative breeder may refer to a social species with helpers, co-breeders or both.

North American ornithologists like to credit Alexander Skutch as the first person to document helping behaviour and cooperative breeding in birds in an article he published in 1935. However, long before this New Zealand ornithologist Guthrie-Smith described communal laying by female Pukeko (1910) as well as territory defence and chick-rearing by Brown Skua trios (1914). Thus New Zealand ornithology can lay claim to producing some of the earliest reports of cooperative breeding in birds.

Approximately 220 species (less than 3% of all bird species) have been reported to be cooperative breeders, but this number is no doubt an under-estimation. Although representing a small proportion of the total number of birds, cooperative breeders have attracted considerable research interest because their behaviour appears to be a puzzle in terms of evolutionary theory; why should individual birds forego their own breeding to help raise offspring that are not their own, or why should birds share their mates and territory with others of the same sex rather than breed on their own? The answers to these questions are many and varied and you might want to consult the list of references below to obtain more details.

However, a common theme in the explanations given to this evolutionary puzzle is that individuals living in cooperative groups are usually better off in terms of their life long reproductive success than trying to go it alone. This may be because of the indirect genetic benefits of helping to raise close-kin, the direct benefits of group-breeding (e.g. gaining access to more or better quality territories, food or mates), or simply because individuals are making the best of a bad situation (e.g. ecological resources for independent breeding are severely constrained).

New Zealand itself has a few species that regularly breed in cooperative groups but such behaviour is not as common among our birds as it is Australia's, which has the richest array of cooperative breeding species in the world. In New Zealand, cooperative breeding is known to regularly occur (at least in some populations) in seven native species. Whiteheads, Yellowheads and Riflemen commonly live in family groups and can have one or more helpers feeding young

at their nest. Young Brown Kiwi remain in their natal territory as helpers for up to four years on Stewart Island, suggesting that this population may experience severe ecological or habitat constraints compared to other populations on the mainland where kiwi breed as pairs. The Brown Skua is the only known seabird to form cooperative groups, with 15% of the territories on the Chatham Islands occupied by two or more males. Most of these co-breeding groups have two males and a female but territories with up to 6 males and a single female have been recorded, and some groups have persisted on the same territorial site for over 15 years.

The Pukeko or Swamphen in New Zealand has one of the most complex mating systems of any cooperative breeding species studied in the world. In some parts of the North Island, where adults normally survive for more than five years, and annual turnover of breeding vacancies on territories is low, Pukeko live in extended family groups comprising between two to five breeding males, one or two breeding females (who lay their eggs in a single 'communal' nest), and from one to five non-breeding helpers. In contrast, Pukeko living in parts of the South Island where adults normally live for only two years on average, breed either as pairs or in small cooperative groups consisting of 2 to 3 males, one or two females and no helpers.

Furthermore, the co-breeding adults are unrelated to each other. With lower survival (probably as a consequence of the harsh winters) the turnover rate of territorial owners is higher than in the North Island and thus young birds can disperse and find suitable breeding sites. However, high quality territories with adequate water and cover for nesting and raising chicks tend to be at a premium and it appears that some adults might form coalitions in order to secure these higher quality nesting sites.

Takahe, which are close relatives to the Pukeko, also form cooperative groups although less frequently than their flighted cousins. In the rugged Murchison Mountains population, juvenile Takahe may stay with their parents as helpers for up to three years. On offshore islands juvenile Takahe leave their parents' territory before the following breeding season but adults occasionally form co-breeding groups. As the density of birds increases on islands and the number of unoccupied territories declines, it will be interesting to see whether Takahe will start to form kin groups of co-breeders and helpers similar to Pukeko in the North Island.

Cooperative breeding undoubtedly occurs in some other New Zealand species but either occurs very infrequently or simply has not been properly recorded. The latter situation can arise, for example,

when a nest with a large number of eggs for a particular species is thought to result from a female laying an exceptionally large clutch. However, this is likely to be a case of two females nesting jointly. I believe a prime candidate for such joint-nesting would be one of our species of oystercatcher which has been recorded to breed communally in America and in Europe.

The underlying message here for the amateur ornithologist is not to take birds and their breeding habits for granted. If one sees three or more adults feeding young at a nest, or if one finds a nest with double the number of eggs of a normal clutch, this may not be simply abnormal or aberrant behaviour on the part of the birds. Rather, your observation may very well document the first record of a form of cooperative breeding in a New Zealand species of bird.

Dr Ian G. Jamieson  
Department of Zoology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

#### General references on cooperative breeding in birds:

- BROWN, J.L. 1987. Helping and communal breeding in birds: ecology and evolution. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.  
STACEY, P.B.; KOENIG, W.D. 1990. Cooperative breeding birds: long-term studies of ecology and behavior. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

#### Specific references of studies of cooperative breeding in New Zealand birds: (Pukeko)

- CRAIG, J.L.; JAMIESON, I.G. 1990. Social behavior of the pukeko: different approaches and some different answers. Pp. 385-412 in Koenig, W.D.; Stacey, P.B. (eds.) Cooperatively Breeding in Birds: Long-term Studies of Ecology and Behaviour. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  
JAMIESON, I.G. 1994. Pukeko - The indomitable swamphen. New Zealand Geographic 21: 54-70.  
JAMIESON, I.G. 1997. Testing reproductive skew models in a communally breeding bird, the pukeko *Porphrio porphyrio*. Proceedings of Royal Society of London B 264:335-340.  
HEMMINGS, A.D. 1989. Communally breeding skuas: breeding success of pairs, trios and groups of *Catharacta lonnbergi* on the Chatham Islands, New Zealand. Journal of Zoology 218: 393-405.  
YOUNG, E.C. 1998. Dispersal from natal territories and the origin of cooperatively polyandrous breeding groups in the Brown Skua. Condor 100: 335-342.  
SHERLEY, G.H. 1990. Relative costs and benefits of co-operative breeding to Riflemen (*Acanthisitta chloris*) parents. Behaviour 112: 1-22.  
GILL, B.J.; MCLEAN, I.G. 1992. Population dynamics of the New Zealand Whitehead (*Pachycephalidae*) - a communal breeder. Condor 94: 628-635.



# Action in Australia

Those of us still getting our minds around the mine of information in the Department of Conservation's *Action Plan for Seabird Conservation in New Zealand* will be staggered by the efforts of the Australians in producing a new version (first edition 1992) of their *Action Plan for Australian Birds*.

I would like to say that it landed on my desk, but a gentle placement was more advisable for this massive tome (673 pp.) written/compiled by Stephen Garnett and Gabriel Crowley for the National Heritage Trust. Although Australia has historically had a much lower extinction rate for its birds (as opposed to the catastrophic losses of its mammals), 1.9% of the original taxa (species and subspecies) have become extinct since 1788, a further 11.5% are considered Threatened (under the IUCN criteria) and 6.0% as Near Threatened.

After introductory sections on the

aims, criteria and coverage, the main body of the text (608 pp.) is devoted to species or subspecies at risk. Under one cover, each of the 236 taxa that are Endangered, Vulnerable, and Near Threatened is dealt with in a standard format that allows the rapid retrieval of information and, so far as it is possible in a compendium, consistency of treatment. Another 53 taxa from the remaining 1114 Least Concern taxa are dealt with as well, if they have a restricted distribution or were threatened in the past.

And that brings us straight to one of the most important problems facing conservation in New Zealand, and one that at present has only lip service, and little or no money, paid to it: the need to develop a full modern taxonomy of the indigenous avifauna.

Contrary to popular opinion, and to official lethargy, even the species level status and relationships of New Zealand birds are poorly known. Systematics and taxonomy, far from being arcane disciplines with the annoying tendency to change cherished traditional names, are vital fields at the basis of both understanding our biodiversity and planning for conservation.

The Australian Action Plan's coverage of each taxon includes its taxonomic status, conservation status (IUCN categories and reasons for the assessment), past and present range and abundance (with standard map), ecology, threats, information required, recovery objectives, actions completed or under way, management actions required, organisations responsible for conservation and other organisations, staff and financial resources required for recovery, and a bibliography and list of those who provided information or commented on drafts.

One must applaud the inclusion of costs and responsibilities of the programmes over the next five years. In all, the required budget 2001-2005 is about A\$35 million from conservation agencies, A\$12 million from other sources, and the equivalent of A\$7 million from volunteers. They expect that this money has the potential to prevent the extinction of 1-15 taxa (from the pessimistic to the optimistic), and reduce the number of Threatened taxa from 155 to 135.

Although New Zealanders will be most interested in the status of the groups we share with our larger neighbour, especially the petrels and other seabirds, and those on our biogeographic outliers (Macquarie and Norfolk Islands), the whole volume makes sobering but compelling reading. It also shows what can be done, even in such a vast area, to limit or alleviate the slide to oblivion of a fair chunk of the Australasian bird fauna.

One or two things jar a little, especially the removal of one of our own threatened (indeed, endangered) species, the Weka, as a pest from Macquarie Island. Truly a weed is something living where it does not belong – perhaps repatriation might have

helped the local populations! There is also unconscious humour: presumably to match sexually-competent felines on Norfolk there must be one or two less fortunate, incompetent, failures in that department, and it would be as well to remove the *uncooperative* rodents from Norfolk as well as the more compliant cooperative individuals.

But, levity aside, this is a major step in the conservation of the Australasian biota. Congratulations to the compilers of the *Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000* and their many supporters and informants and the system (Environment Australia and Birds Australia) that allowed its preparation. Roll on its New Zealand one-cover equivalent.

RICHARD HOLDAWAY

*The volume is available from Environment Australia's Community Information Unit (0061) 2 6274 1111, email: ciu@ea.gov.au or on their website at: <http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/threaten/plans/action/index.htm>*

## Donations

The following people have recently donated funds to the Society: their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

Shannon Lloyd, Michael Criglington, Rachel Keedwell, Mrs G. Norman, Dr Gordon Nicholson, Bruce Mackereth, L.S. Rickard, David & Stella Pye, David Steventon, Brian Darlow, Gillian Eller, J.A. Wilson, W. (Bill) J. Campbell, Peter Rowley, Anthea Goodwin, Betty Seddon, Jean Creighton, Dr PL. Munns, Peter Howden, Wayne Knowles, Marie M. Simpson, Mike & Sharon Graham, Barry Friend, Tony Habraken E.J. Kirk, Chris Foreman, Barry Hartley, Barbara Walter, Jack Davidson, Nikki McArthur, Elizabeth (Biz) Bell, C.G. Hill, W.A. Watters, Marie Neverman, G.W. Wells, Gerry Kessels, Dr K.D.B. Thomson, John Davenport, Peter Grant, Ian Sutherland, Mike Imber, Mr & Mrs T.G. Short, R.J. Meadows, Mrs Joy Soper Martin Snowball, Mr & Mrs D.M. Stracey, Sue Moore, Stuart Nicholson, Mr & Mrs D.H. Booth, Mike Bell, A.J. Beachamp, Rob & Anneke Schuckard, Dr Michael Fitzgerald

We gratefully acknowledge the sum of a further \$300 from Northland region from sale of greetings cards in support of *Southern Bird*.

HAZEL HARTY  
Membership Secretary.

## Nominations for Regional Representatives 2002

Each region of the Society shall have a Regional Representative who will be an Officer of the Society and as such is responsible to the Council for the management of the region. Each RR shall serve for one year (from 1 January 2002) and is eligible for re-election.

Nominations for the Regional Representative of each region of the Society will close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 2001. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must be a financial member of the Society.

If more than one valid nomination is received by the Secretary a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2002 year.

CHRISTINE REED  
Hon. Secretary



# Birds at Silktail Lodge

A Long-legged Warbler, one of Fiji's rare birds, was reportedly sighted recently at Silktail Lodge, Devo, Vanua Levu, Fiji. It was sighted by two English birders, Richard Nutter and Sarah Deakin along with two Fijians, one of whom has a very strong interest in the birds of the Tunuloa Peninsula in Fiji.

Surprisingly the sighting was in the bushes on the edge of the public road which skirts the beach of Devo Bay. The bird was seen with a cluster of other forest species which included the Spotted Fantail, Slaty Flycatcher, Golden Whistler and Fiji Shrikebill.

There is not much known about this species and the bird books about Fijian Birds, Watling (1982), Clunie (1984), and Pratt, Bruner and Berrett (1987), all suggest that the species hadn't been seen since 1974. Personal correspondence from an American birder to me reported a sighting near Nadi in densely wooded scrubland in 1986 but I have received or read no other reports. Rick Thorpe, during his survey of the Devo and the Tunuloa forests in 1989 for the Department of Conservation, failed to locate the bird.

Some people might think that the sighting was simply a mistaken Fiji Warbler. Fiji Warblers are relatively common throughout the Devo area, but most people who look for birds generally at Devo come to know the Fiji Warbler well. Vodo, the bird guide at Devo, is particularly familiar with it and he would not mistake the Fiji Warbler for a Long-legged Warbler, which is a larger bird with long legs and with a distinctive white eye-stripe.

For those interested in furthering their knowledge of Fiji birds, Silktail Lodge is proving to be a good place to start. This place is a small bird-watchers' hideaway which has been developed by a group of New Zealanders in an attempt to provide some employment in a distant part of Fiji, and to help with the conservation of forests and birds. In a few years, and after numerous problems, it is starting to achieve these goals in small ways. In an irregular fashion it gives employment to about five people and it has certainly introduced an interest in birds among the people in the larger area.

The lodge, which is set in close proximity to the bush, is comprised of two cottages and a larger building. Currently it sleeps about nine people comfortably. There are three kitchens for those who want to cook for themselves but meals can be provided on site. There are three bathrooms but no hot water.

As a place to see birds, Silktail Lodge has proved to be a very easy locality in which to bird-watch. Forests are handy and accessible, and of generally easy contour. A number of species can be seen around the bures, including Vanikoro Broadbills, Spotted Fantails, Slaty Flycatchers, Orange-throated Honeyeaters, Fiji Goshawks, Golden Whistlers and once a Barn Owl.

A walk along the beach, which is over two kilometres long, might also provide an interesting list including such species as Wandering Tattlers with their beautiful whistles, Golden Plovers, Reef Herons, both white and grey, and Mangrove Herons.

For those who enjoy the true rainforests a list of many other species might be added. Prime among these is the Silktail, known by many as the gem of the Fiji forests, but also Island Thrush, Ground Dove, Orange Dove, Scarlet breasted Musk Parrot and Giant Honeyeater.

Should anyone want to use Silktail Lodge this winter they can do so on a "free" basis. This means if they are prepared to take all their personal requirements such as food, toilet requirements, insect sprays and gas but not bedding, plus a tip (koha or sevusevu) to local staff on departure. So if you want a change of birds or if you want to see something different give Silktail Lodge a try. You might find something important. For further information contact me.

STUART CHAMBERS  
[www.geocities.com/silktailodge](http://www.geocities.com/silktailodge) or email  
[as\\_chambers@xtra.co.nz](mailto:as_chambers@xtra.co.nz)

## Oamaru penguin symposium 21 & 22 June, 2001

Moeraki Room, Quality Hotel Brydone, Oamaru.

**T**he third biennial Oamaru Penguin Symposium will be a two day scientific meeting centred upon the Blue Penguin but will also present work on Yellow-eyed Penguins. Zoologists will present from the Universities of Waikato, Lincoln, Otago and the Department of Conservation, as well as from Murdoch University, Western Australia and Phillip Island, Victoria, plus independent biologists. Topics to be covered will include breeding and feeding biology, predator control, tourism interactions and Blue Penguin taxonomy.

Registration for this two day meeting is \$40.00 and open to anyone interested in the biology of penguins and their environment. The fee covers lunch, morning and afternoon tea for each of the two days and the provision of a book of abstracts of the presentations. There will be a \$10 late payment penalty for registrations received after 31 May 2001. The three course, *table d'hôte*, conference dinner will include coffee & mints for \$35; liquors, of course will be extra. Dinner will be hosted in the nationally reputed Thomas' Restaurant at the symposium venue on the Thursday evening, 7:00 for 7:30. The meeting will begin after morning tea on Thursday to allow travelling time to Oamaru for that morning. For people flying in, consideration should be given to using the Air NZ Link service into Timaru airport which is but eighty minutes drive to Oamaru, compared to the two hours to Dunedin airport. All the major car hire companies provide a service out of Timaru.

Publication of abstracts will be sought in a listed New Zealand scientific journal. All speakers will be expected to allow their submitted extracts to go forward for consideration for publication.

I am grateful to Dave Houston for making available his comprehensive penguin web site at <http://www.penguin.net.nz/events/ops.html> where a provisional programme, registration forms and accommodation information is available; the same information will also be available in hard copy from the convenor, upon request.

For further information please contact the convenor,  
A.G. Hocken, "East Riding", Whiterocks Road, RD 6-D Oamaru, New Zealand.  
Tel/fax: (03) 434 81 88 E mail: [agh@es.co.nz](mailto:agh@es.co.nz)

## Pigeon Food Sources

**F**rom May 1998 to July 2000, I recorded the foods I saw New Zealand Pigeons eating in the Dunedin Botanic Garden and adjoining northern cemetery. The "extra" three months were to compensate for June/July 1999, when I made only two observations.

At that time the pigeons were taking advantage of an excellent crop of bush fruit – they were abundant on Mt Cargill, where I saw them eating broadleaf, lancewood, haumakaroa and pepper tree. The foods I recorded are listed below, with the number of observations of each in brackets.

### Fleshy fruits:

New Zealand native – cabbage tree spp (58), ngaio (46), black maire (22),



# Chestnut Teal

## Identification and occurrence in New Zealand

(Why the Manawatu Estuary?)

The Chestnut Teal (*Anas castanea*) is essentially a bird of SE Australia, but since Jim Moore found the first one (at the Manawatu Estuary in June 1991) a total of 18 birds have been identified in New Zealand, and accepted by the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee.

Separating Chestnut Teal from Grey Teal (*A. gracilis*) is a variable problem. Breeding plumaged drakes are very straightforward, with only superficial similarities to Australasian Shoveler (*A. rhynchotis*) and Brown Teal (*A. aucklandica*). Females are much trickier, and can only be identified with extreme care since they look a lot like Grey Teals – many Australian birders just don't bother, until they find a pair! Birds in transitional plumage, particularly immature drakes, present a variety of features and are sometimes fairly easy.

A quick look at the NZ records reveals a couple of strange facts: only two have been seen away from the Manawatu (a drake in Canterbury and a duck in Otago) and the vast majority of the Manawatu

birds have been immature drakes. Why the Manawatu? and why immature drakes?

The suggestion (in the NZ Field Guide) that there may be a small breeding population in the Manawatu does not make much sense to me. If it existed then we would surely see the adult drakes at some stage. I feel that it is much more likely that our birds are wandering in from Australia, probably with Grey Teal, and so a west coast arrival point – with a concentration of other ducks – would be reasonable. Immature male birds of many species are well known throughout the world for their greater pre-disposition to vagrancy. Add the fact that immature, and adult, females are terribly difficult to separate from Grey Teal and the age/sex ratios that are observed here should not come as much of a surprise.

I imagine that there are probably more Chestnut Teals going unnoticed in New Zealand. The fact that so many have been spotted at the Manawatu is down to heightened observer awareness (and experience) and the often very favourable viewing conditions – the flocks of Grey Teal, with which Chestnut Teal invariably associate, normally allow very close scrutiny indeed.

So, how to find yourself an immature drake Chestnut Teal? Firstly, start looking carefully through flocks of Grey Teal for birds that are a ruddy chestnut colour on the breast. Many of the Manawatu birds have had a distinctly red upper breast, even when the flanks have been brown,

though this feature may only be obvious when the bird is head-on. They tend to be quite big, bulky birds, but only as big as the largest Grey Teals – which are quite variable in size. A dark head to below the level of the eye is also indicative, and some have a greenish tinge to the crown. The white flank patch of the adult drake is sometimes present in a diminished form, just a paler smudge in the correct location, but often accompanied by very dark – almost black – undertail coverts. Be aware that the description above fits perfectly well for Brown Teal – so be sure that the bird has a red (not white) eye and has the same wing pattern as Grey Teal, before sending off the Unusual Bird Report!

Females, as already stated, are really hard work, and the biggest problem is that there is no one diagnostic feature – rather you have to rely on a whole suite of fairly subjective and very subtle differences. A large, dark, brown-toned, dark-chinned Grey Teal with a dark crown which extends further down onto the face than normal, might well be a Chestnut Teal, but you would want to have seen it really closely to notice all that, and almost have to have other Grey Teal there for immediate comparison, so perhaps the females will continue to elude us for a while.

I'm pretty sure that they are out there, particularly the young drakes, just waiting to be found, and in more places than just the Manawatu Estuary. Just before duck-shooting starts, get out and take a look!

IAN (SAV) SAVILLE

from page 6

wineberry (15), poroporo (13), kahikatea (12), Fuchsia (10), mahoe (7), mapou (6), broadleaf, lancewood, *Corokia x virgata* (5), marbleleaf (4), miro, white maire, *Coprosma grandifolia*, *C. robusta* (3), pokaka, puriri (2), *Coprosma lucida*, *C. x cunninghamii*, *Corokia macrocarpa*, karaka, *Ileostylus micranthus*, rohutu, milk tree (1).

Exotic – yew (36), holly (16), *Crategus pubescens* (12), *C. x lavellei* (6), crabapple, *Arbutus unedo* (1).

### Leaves, flowers etc:

Native – kowhai (403), lowland ribbonwood (55), lacebark spp. (27), *Calystegia tuguriorum* (25), kanuka, mahoe (7), milk tree (5), *Coprosma crassifolia* (4), *Parsonia heterophylla* (2), *Korthasella lindsayi* (1).

Exotic – elm (118), rowan (39), plum, cherry (3), tree lucerne, *Laburnum*, *Robinia pseudoacacia* (23), willow (22), poplar (19), *Magnolia* (6), *Virgilia* (2) crabapple, holly, *Sorbus domestica* (1).

The foods recorded most often in each month were: January - rowan, February - wineberry, March - ngaio, April - cabbage tree, May - September - kowhai, October - December - elm. However results varied considerably from year to year.

ALAN BAKER

## Got a "thing" for Parrots? Join the Birds Australia Parrot Association

**B**AAPA is a special interest group of Birds Australia dedicated to the study and conservation of wild parrots and their habitats in the Australasian region. Despite this region being one of the world's most important for parrots there has been a lack of any research or community group with an interest in them, either within the region or elsewhere.

BAPA tries to focus interest on some of the world's rarest parrots, such as the Kakapo, Orange-fronted Parakeet and Orange-bellied Parrot, as well as some of the most abundant and difficult to manage species such as Corellas, Galah and Rainbow Lorikeet.

As most threatening processes within the region (habitat clearance, loss of nesting hollows, predation, changes in fire regimes, etc) threaten at least one species of parrot, BAPA aims to promote discussion and exchange of ideas that should benefit many other bird species as well.

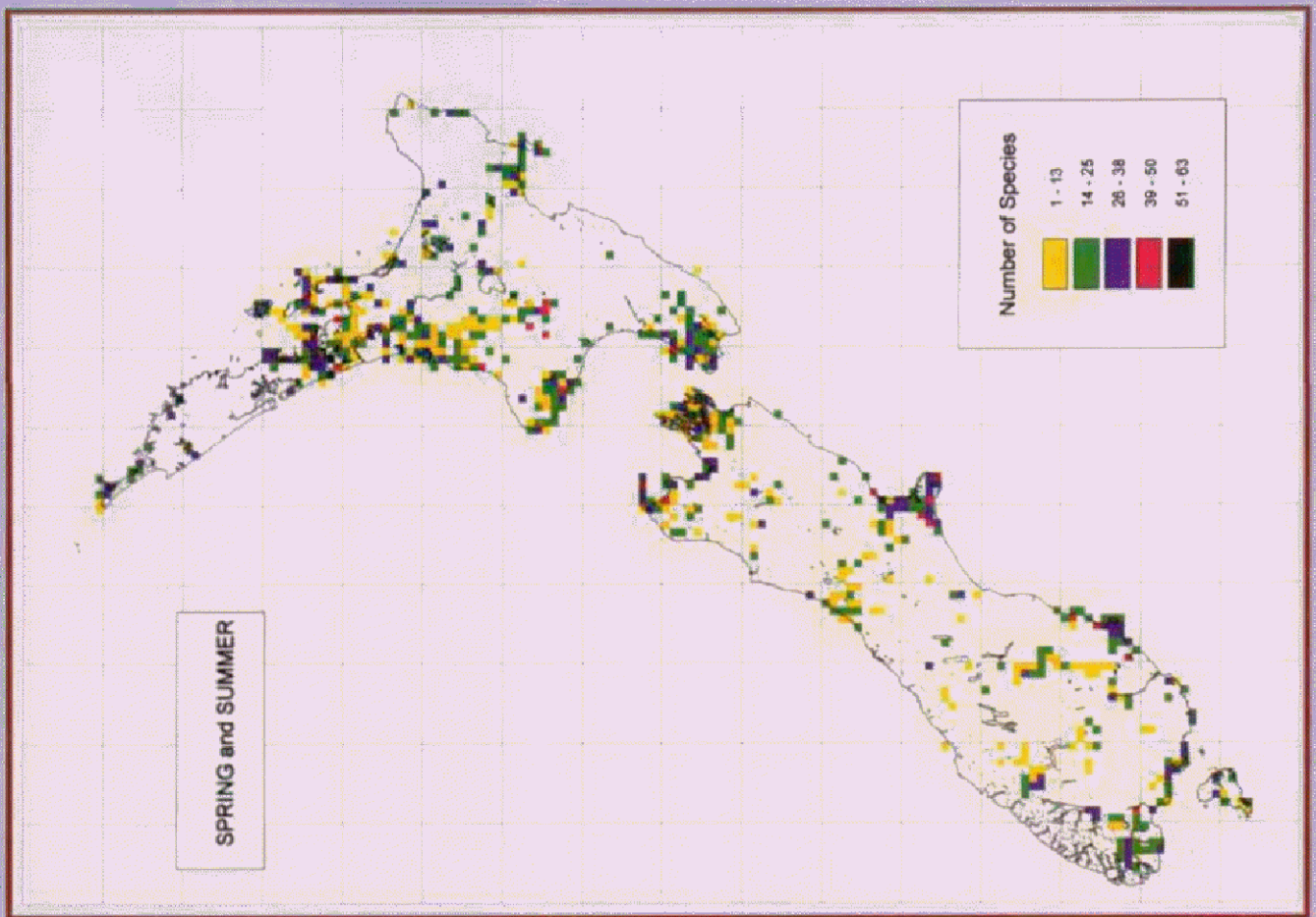
BAPA publishes the newsletter *Eclectus* twice yearly and runs expeditions (e.g. 1998 trip to Cape York studying *Eclectus* Parrots, Palm Cockatoos, Red-cheeked Parrots and Fig Parrots) and projects as well as preparing policies on parrot-related matters. BAPA welcomes participation by all interested and concerned people. Membership is open to anyone interested in the conservation and research of wild parrots and their habitats in Australasia and adjacent areas, including the south-west Pacific, Melanesia and south-east Asia.

**For subscription/membership details please contact:**

**Terry Greene,  
BAPA New Zealand Representative,  
Department of Conservation,  
Private Bag 68 908,  
Newton,  
Auckland.**

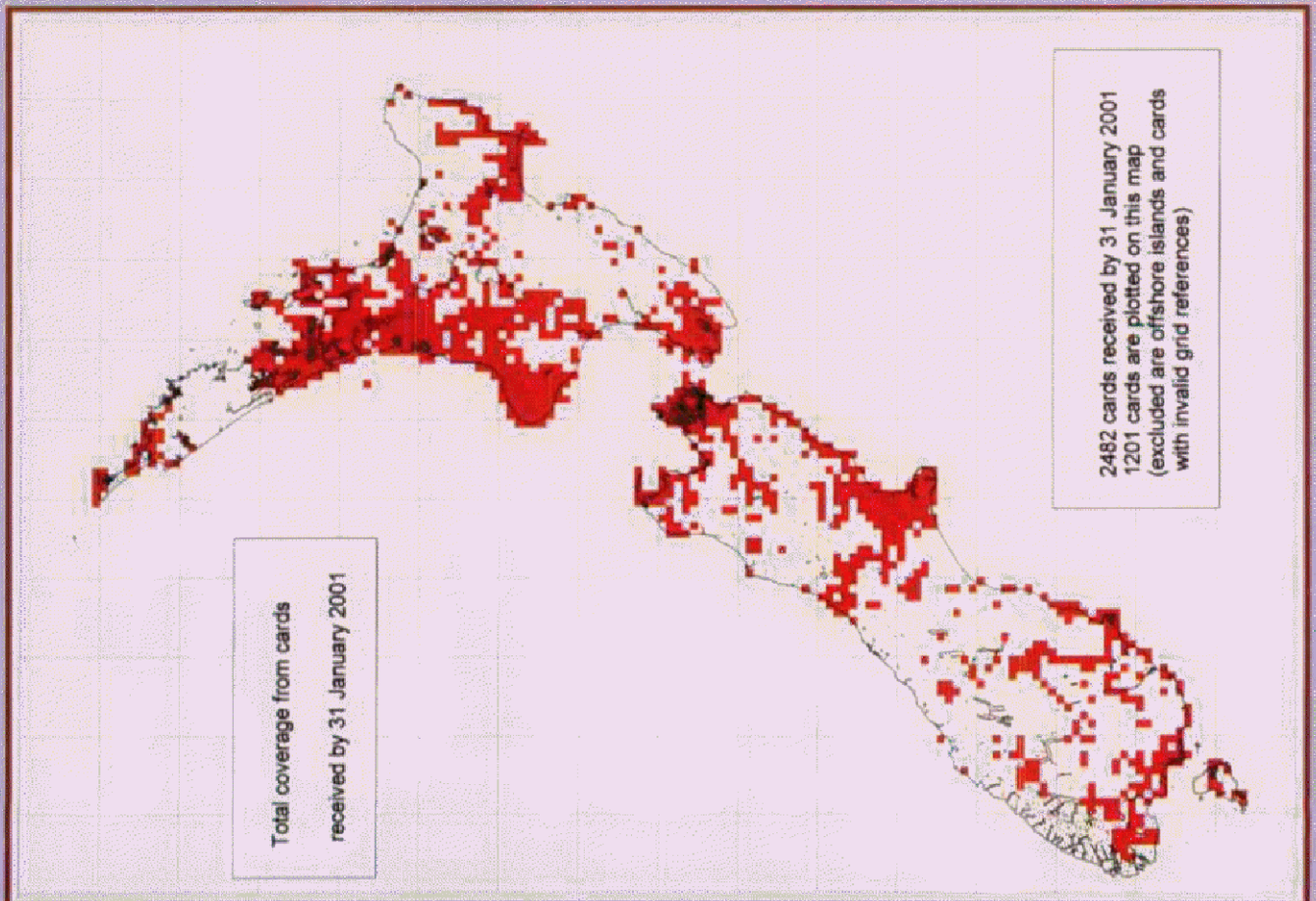
**Ph.: (09) 3074835 E-mail: tgreene@doc.govt.nz**



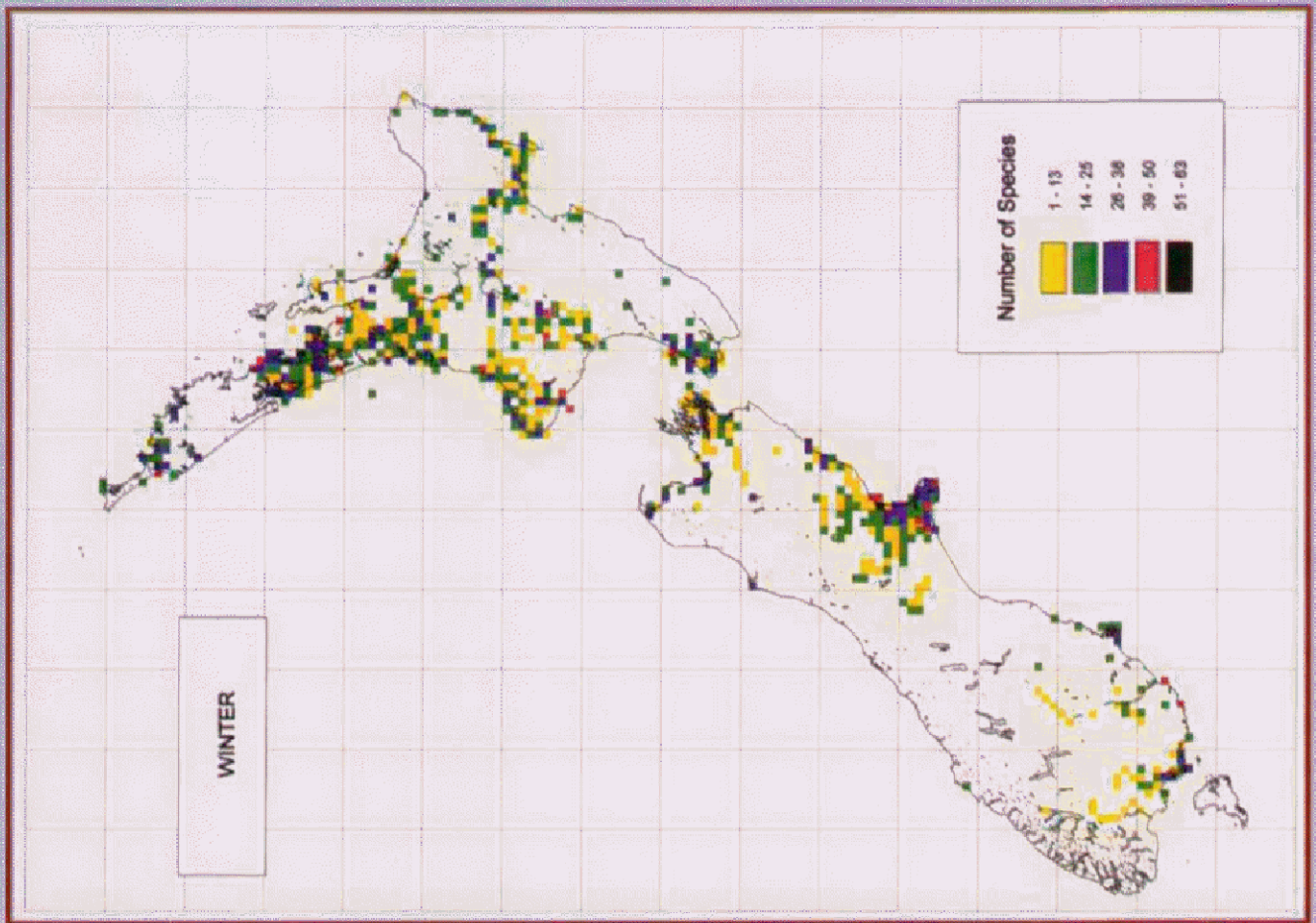


# ATLAS UPDATE

These maps record the distribution of squares and numbers of species seen from some 2200+ data sheets returned to the Convenor by 31 December 2000. There are a number of geographic gaps that we know are caused by records not yet having been delivered for processing. The RR Hawke's Bay is apologetic for still holding the wide coverage from the AGM in 2000. Though not mapped we do have records from the Chatham Islands. However the maps give a good indication of some areas where the effort has been high – showing more than 26 species

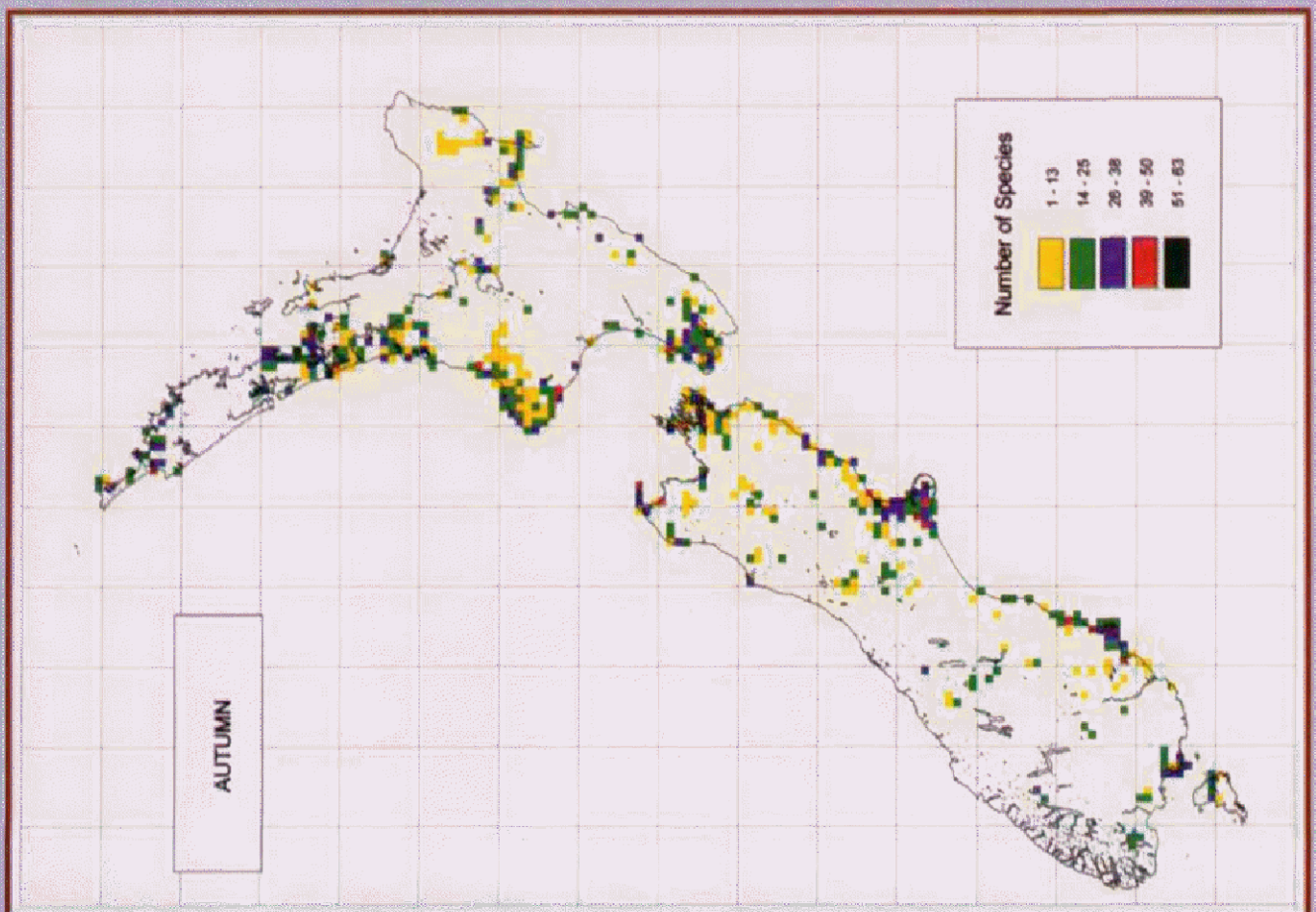






seen. Areas with less than 13 species often represent a more cursory visit or record from the square. The aim is to have at least one record from each square once in each season during the term of the atlas project. The blank areas provide a challenge for all members to plan ahead in their ornithological travels. Ensure that you attend the AGM for the next three years and help to fill in some of the more remote parts of the countryside. We are greatly indebted to Andy Grant of DoC Canterbury for producing these first trial maps from a database created by Derek Batcheler. Many thanks to those who have already provided material

CHRIS ROBERTSON & GRAEME TAYLOR



# Japanese Snipe at the Manawatu Estuary

## Separation from other *Gallinago* species

On the 4th of December 1999, Tony Wilson and a group of British birders saw a Snipe (*Gallinago* sp.) at the Manawatu Estuary. The bird was flushed from vegetation at the water's edge and flew away, calling as it went. This is typical of snipe behaviour, and most of the New Zealand records of snipe (about 20) are of birds seen in similar circumstances. Trying to specifically identify the bird from brief flight views would be difficult to say the least, but luckily this particular individual hung around for the whole summer and has returned again in summer 2000/01, and it's identification as Japanese Snipe (*G. hardwickii*) has been proven.

There are no other *Gallinago* species on the New Zealand list, and Japanese is by far the most likely to occur, but there are two potential confusion species that would need to be considered before any NZ record of snipe can be specifically accepted. Both Pin-tailed (*G. stenura*) and Swinhoe's (*G. megala*) Snipe occur in Australia, and could just possibly get this far. Separating the three species in the field is tricky, but possible, and there are certainly a couple of things to look out for if you are lucky enough to stumble across a snipe in the future.

In general terms all *Gallinago* snipes look very similar – stocky birds with long, straight bills and cryptic, variegated plumage. If it is assumed that the bird is going to be flushed and only seen in flight, the following might help. The first factors

to consider are the size and structure of the bird – and any experience of snipes overseas will certainly help. Pin-tailed are comparatively small and slightly built, with rounded wings and a shortish bill. Japanese are big and bulky, with long, pointed wings and a very long bill – and Swinhoe's are somewhere in-between (!?).

If the bird calls as it is flushed then it is almost certainly not a Swinhoe's, which rarely calls. Both the others regularly call in flight but with rather different tones – Pin-tailed is slurred and nasal, with almost a duck-like quality, and Japanese is harsher, more rasping and a bit like a Starling contact call.

There does appear to be one constant characteristic which can separate the species, and that is the projection – or lack of it – of the toes beyond the tail. Pin-tailed trails almost all of its foot beyond the tail, Swinhoe's just the tips of the toes and Japanese no toe projection at all. (NB this is in contradiction to the illustrations of Japanese Snipe in several publications.)

The Manawatu Snipe was accepted as a Japanese by the Rare Birds Committee on the strength of a combination of all the above and a lucky photograph (by Alex Scott) showing the outstretched wing which has a whitish outer primary – a diagnostic feature that I think is virtually impossible to see in the field.

IAN (SAV) SAVILLE

## The inaugural Australian Ornithological Conference

Charles Sturt University  
Bathurst, NSW  
4 - 7 December 2001

The AOC is intended to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas between people involved in avian-based research and conservation throughout Australasia. Designed to complement the four yearly Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress, it is anticipated that the AOC will be held every two years and become the main scientific event on the Australasian ornithological calendar. This first AOC is a Birds Australia Centennial Year Event.

The conference program will span three days and feature topical symposia, poster sessions, workshops and round-table discussions in addition to regular contributed papers.

For further information contact:

AOC 2001 Conference Secretariat  
Conference Solutions  
PO Box 238

Deakin West ACT 2600

Phone: 61 (2) 6285 3000

Fax: 61 (2) 6285 3001

E-mail: [birds@con-sol.com](mailto:birds@con-sol.com)

Website: <http://clio.mit.csu.edu.au/aoc2001>

## Obituary

### Pauline Jenkins

Pauline Jenkins of Blenheim died on 15 June 2000 in her 78th year.

Born in 1921, the eldest of one of the Canterbury pioneer families, World War II provided Pauline with the chance of a career. She did home science at Otago University and, after graduating, worked as Institutional Manager at the Women's College of the University of Sydney.

In 1946 Peter Jenkins and Pauline were married and settled in Wellington where Peter was a house surgeon. Pauline worked at the Standards Institute as a technical officer until 1948, when their daughter Pam was born. The family moved to Blenheim where their two sons were born.

Involving herself in charitable social work and refereeing hockey (from her experience as an Otago University rep.) were not sufficiently stimulating for Pauline, so when the family reached kindergarten age she joined the Kindergarten Assn committee. This led her to being appointed to the National Council of Women in 1951. She became its first president from 1952-1954, vice-president from 1966-1969 and later Patron. Through these positions Pauline initiated the Marriage Guidance Council, the Citizens' Advice Bureau in Marlborough and liaised with Victoria University Adult Education to run courses in Blenheim.

All her life Pauline felt that one's sex had nothing to do with one's value to the community. She was appointed to the Standards Council and later, when it was formed, the Consumer Council, was a parents' representative to the Marlborough Colleges Board, and from 1966-1974 ward member on

the Wellington Education Board. She became a Justice of the Peace in 1963 and an honorary member of the JP Association in 1995. She received a Jubilee Medal in 1964 and a Queen's Service Medal in 1996.

Pauline's interest in the outdoors and Lake Rotoiti, where the family had a cottage, resulted in her appointment to the Nelson Lakes National Park Board and the Mt Richmond Forest Park Committee. She was also on the committee which set up Rotoiti Lodge for the use of secondary schools. Recently, with her great interest in history, she worked as a volunteer for the Marlborough Historical Society archives.

Pauline was a member of the Ornithological Society for 35 years and the Marlborough Regional Representative from 1979-1985. In June 1991, while Bev North was RR, Blenheim held a most successful AGM - this was most courageous, as there were only four members. When asked what should be done about serving alcohol at the venue, Marlborough Girls' College, Pauline replied "Don't ask, they would have to say no".

With her busy life ornithology was pure relaxation for Pauline, which she did mostly by herself. Over the years she carried out regular surveys at Grassmere and her field notebooks were full of observations at Lake Rotoiti from 40 years of family holidays.

Pauline was an excellent field observer, most knowledgeable and great fun to be with. A very special person, whose friends will miss her.

ROSEMARY HEATHER



## It might be Significant, but does it *mean* anything?

Many Society members are reluctant to read papers in *Notornis* or even to open the thing. This is a pity. There is always much of general interest in there, even if some of it is cloaked in jargon. And, like most of the things we fear, the more you try it the more you might like it. It could even be habit-forming. And you might find a use for that pile of journals behind the couch. This is the first of what threatens to be a series on how to get more out of your journal.

Others might deal with: what are the parts of a paper all about? or why do they all look the same? how to deal with graphs and tables, and maybe how to write a note or a paper, for those many members who have interesting things in their notebooks that we should all know about, but for whom the terror of writing to an editor is only marginally less than of public speaking and MUCH greater than of certain death.

Finally, though, none of these articles is meant to stand alone as a resource for learning science, and least of all, statistics. They are meant purely to remove some of the aura of inscrutability that apparently exists for many Society members. Scientists are (by and large) human and what they do is a human activity that should be accessible to more people, if for no other reason than most of the salaries come from the public purse. Besides, the papers are about birds; and we all want to know more about *them*, so, we should get it over with and deal with:

### The worst first?

Some of the scariest and most obscure terms in a scientific paper are in the statistical sections: just what is significant to a scientist, and we all know what errors are, but can we be so sure of them that we can have *standard errors*, and goodness knows what a *standard deviation* is - something to measure your deviance against? Well, despite Lord Rutherford's view that if you had to do statistics, then you obviously had not designed the experiment properly, in biology things are not as clear cut and countable as in physics.

Biology and variety and variation are virtual synonyms. Hence, scientists must have ways of deciding just how much of their observation could result from natural variation and how much is caused by or the result of what they are interested in. You have to draw the line somewhere, and by universal (or nearly universal - you can't please everybody) agreement, a chance of 1 in 20 of being wrong is taken as being good enough. 1 in 20 is 5 chances in 100, or 5%, or 0.05... hence, a significance level of 5% just means that 95 times out of 100 what you think happened is what happened... if you want to be more sure of yourself. And how do you tell whether the odds are that long, or maybe longer... that is where the *tests* come in. Each is cunningly designed to not *quite* fit the situation you have, but you can usually kid yourself that the differences don't matter that much.

Then you take your data (that is, the numbers you are interested in) and see whether they match expectations - that is where the nice formulae come in. But different as they may be, and they can be as different as Student's *t* and good old chi-squared... or the posher ANOVA, or one of a host of others, all the formulae have one thing in common: they give you a number. And depending on whether that number is bigger or smaller than a set of standard numbers (the theoretical distributions of the chances in the situation you have - the punter's odds) then your answers are either significant or not. Then, when they are, you have to decide whether that is significant or not... For you see, that a statistician's significant means whether it is mathematically likely or not, at a particular set of odds. The knack of being a good scientist is to be able to fathom whether that level of mathematical certainty means anything in the real world, to you and the animals that you are dealing with.

But, being a good scientist, you have stacked the deck well, and you have limited the range of cards that could be dealt. And we have, we hope, learned a little more about the natural world around us.

So, don't be afraid of the numbers and symbols. Skim over them, if you feel intimidated by them - leave them to the scientists to work out - but don't be put off by their lurking on the next page. Read the paper - and the journal - to learn about the birds. Because however many statistics are in there, the story is about the birds. There is something in all the papers and notes for everyone, if you have the courage to look for it.

The people who do the work and write it up are just like everyone else; they love the birds and love working with them. If anything, pity them the hours spent analysing the numbers, writing it up in the rather strict format expected for a scientific paper, enduring the critiques of colleagues and then referees and the final joust with an editor who is both incompetent and a pedant (and they are all, to most authors, one or the other, or both!), to finally see their work in print. The least you can do for the poor suffering souls is to read the end product...

RICHARD HOLDAWAY  
Editor, *Notornis*

## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### Northland

With the broken legs of three of our members well and truly mended, the region is now running on all four cylinders, and is well under way for our 2001 programme.

The main bird of interest in the region over the summer months was once again the Fairy Tern. A dedicated team of OSNZ members helped the Department of Conservation workers at both the Waipu Spit and the Mangawhai sandhills to monitor the pre-nuptial behaviour, to see who is courting whom, the incubation period (which remains the same), hatching, which is always exciting, chick surveillance (where are they hiding today?) and finally to the fledging stage and learning to fend for themselves. This long process to fledging takes about two months.

The annual banding of Black-backed Gull chicks was once again carried out at the usual site. Monthly beach patrols of both the east and west coasts have continued. Recently we have established a workshop on the identification of seabirds recovered from the monthly beach patrols. Lorna Simpkin has kindly provided her double garage for the venue to process these sometimes smelly decaying cadavers. This arrangement provides an opportunity for patrollers to share combined knowledge to make accurate identifications of these sometimes small remnants of bones and feathers that one day may allow us, with capability and excitement I might add, to identify an unusual vagrant visitor to our shores.

The Christmas 2000 gathering was held at the Onerahi Hotel restaurant which was a change from our usual barbecue. 23 people enjoyed the delicious meal and stories, lively anecdotes and experiences were shared amongst lots of laughter.

The shaking down time and lots of planning have provided a blueprint for our activities over the next four years for the atlas scheme. Members have expressed interest in developing a system to retain data collected locally so that we are able to evaluate and monitor our progress.

Passerine Banding 2000 by Ray Pierce proved interesting, and his notes follow.

(Janet Snell)

1500 birds were banded, twice as many as in any other year. Most of these were banded at the Kiripaka site where over 1100 new birds were captured and 131 recaptures were made. A total of 400 new birds were banded at the Mt Tiger site, with species composition and numbers very similar to that of 1999.

Silvereys dominated the catch of 328 new birds, but nine other species included 25 Grey Warblers, 11 Tui, 10 Fantails, three



Pied Tits and three NZ Kingfishers. All Tui were colour banded to enable individual recognition and help with population studies and movement. At the Kiripaka site 1098 Silvereyes were banded with other birds being netted as well. These were 10 Chaffinches, three Blackbirds, a Grey Warbler, Tui, kingfisher, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Fantail, two House Sparrows and two Welcome Swallows.

In addition to the record numbers of new captures at Kiripaka there were 130 different recaptured Silvereyes from earlier years. This included 70 birds from last year, representing 19% interyear recovery. Birds were recaptured from all seven banding years, including four individuals from 7 1/2 to 8 years old or older. All four birds have been recaptured in several other years as well, indicating that they are probably regular winter residents at Kiripaka.

No Silvereye movements of any significant distance have been recorded this year. Since 1993 we have had ten Silvereye movements of 5-12 kms and one Waikato recovery of 260-285 kms. With over 1500 newly banded birds this year we currently have a good chance of picking up more recoveries of moved birds – keep checking cat kills, windows and, of course, those car grills. It is planned to continue with banding in 2001 to pursue objectives of investigating longevity and dispersal of Silvereyes and other species, as well as collecting morphometric data. It is also a good opportunity for beginners to learn techniques of netting, banding, handling and measuring birds, not to mention partaking of quality morning teas.

(Ray Pierce)

## Auckland

We ended with year 2000 with the light topic “birds of Christmas cards”, of which Michael Taylor has an assortment, followed by a quiz in which teams tried to identify the inhabitants of an ornithologist’s Christmas tree. Then using the letters of “Christine Thompson” we set out to find as many bird names as possible. Chris, lately returned from overseas, took this in good part by contributing to a tally of more than 20 species, which included heron, scoter, coot, moorhen, and even ostrich (cleverly detected by Mel Galbreath).

The wader count of Mangawhai Spit on 18 November, during which the team of six was thoroughly sand-blasted, returned the totals – NZ Dotterel 81, Variable Oystercatcher 99, South Island Pied Oystercatcher 42, Pied Stilt 34, Bar-tailed Godwit 345, Red Knot 229 and Turnstone 14. The small Caspian Tern colony had 24 birds, some of which appeared to be incubating.

Summer surveys of Kaipara, Manukau and Waitemata harbours occupied many members during November. The south Kaipara wader

census totalled 32,080 birds, including 19,167 godwits and 8,317 knots. Rare sightings included a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and two Grey-tailed Tattlers. A remarkable score of 44 Little Terns was also recorded.

During the Muriwai beach patrol on 10 November Claire Exley recovered a Caspian Tern bearing band H-21625 which proves it to have been marked as a chick by Malcolm Waller, Sylvia Reed and helpers 22 years ago at Kaipara South Head on 22/11/78. The blue plastic leg band of that season’s cohort was also still in place.

To open our 2001 season 15 members and friends gathered on 23 January for a picnic at Western Springs, after which we circuted the lake, making a tally of 30 species. Although we failed to find the dabchicks which had recently nested, there were many young coots with young among the usual rich population of geese, Black Swans, Mallards and Pukeko, besides a few Scaup and a pair of Paradise Shelducks. The shag colony held nesting Pies and Little Blacks but only two or three Little Shags were to be seen – for reasons unknown this species has declined to the point of being a scarce bird in the Auckland region.

Meetings for 2001 opened with a members’ night. Michael Taylor played selected items from his collection of sound recordings, Geoff Arnold related recent experiences with kiwi in Trounson Kauri Park and observations of Shining Cuckoos around his home in Titirangi where three fledglings were being fed by Grey Warblers, then Kevin Parker nicely explained the first stage of his research project to study the Fernbird population of the wetlands at Omaha. Ray Clough showed good slides of the nesting of a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels at Mangere – successful despite the heavy traffic associated with the current work of decommissioning the oxidation ponds. Peter Penny then rounded off the show with a photographic survey of displays and nesting behaviour of Pied Shags at the Panmure colony. We wound up with reports of local sightings and further conversation over the usual supper cuppa.

(Michael Taylor)

## South Auckland

The holiday season has seriously disrupted the organised activities of the South Auckland region since the previous report. There was no December meeting which was replaced by the annual barbecue. This year it was held at Stuart and Alison Chambers’ property on theThis year it was held at Stuart and Alison Chambers’ property on the southern shores of the Manukau Harbour. The event was timed to coincide with the falling tide so that we could all witness Stuart’s waders returning from the roosts to feed on the mudflats in front of his property. Large numbers of godwits and knots did come to feed but unfortunately

not until the tide had receded too far for good views. However it was a very hot and sunny day and following the good food we did enjoy the shade on the front terrace. The first meeting of the year is scheduled for the second week in February which will be the annual meeting and an opportunity for members to show slides or describe their own activities from the past year. An interesting programme has been developed for the first part of the year and the details should be listed in the “What’s On” section of this copy of Southern Bird.

The Black-billed Gull banding programme continued this year with three separate breeding colonies, one in the Firth of Thames at the mouth of the Waihou River, one at Gordons Road near Waiuku on the very south of the Manukau Harbour and the third at Papakanui Spit in the Kaipara Harbour. These dispersed colonies kept Tony Habraken on his toes but luckily the breeding was staggered with each being a week later than the other from south to north. Banding at the colonies took place in January which is much later than the South Island colonies. It is noticeable that over 80% of the birds in the breeding colonies have now been banded at some stage during the previous 6 years and it is interesting to note that most pairs are same age cohort birds. This year a number of pairs were individually colour banded to see if they retained their pair fidelity through the winter and into next breeding season.

The Firth of Thames colony was by far the largest with over 300 pairs nesting, but following a high tide at the crucial part of the cycle we ended up banding 232 chicks. Most of these birds would have fledged and a few have subsequently been seen around the Firth of Thames.

The following week was the turn of the Gordons Road colony which consisted of 20 pairs, but when we turned up to band the resulting chicks which had been growing well two weeks previously there was not a bird to be seen. Presumably the whole of the colony had been predated, which also included 100 White-fronted Tern nests. There was no sign of a culprit, although the bank is accessible at low tide and presumably a stoat or cat had done its worst.

On 26 January it was the turn of the Papakanui Spit colony and nine people attended, with some adventures in the canoes crossing the narrow but bumpy channel. The gull chicks were separated from the very large White-fronted Tern colony without disturbing the nearby Fairy Tern chick. There were 26 chicks banded from this colony.

Every chick banded over the last six years has a different cohort combination for each of the harbours and each of the years. Any of these banded birds can therefore be identified to the year and a harbour in which it was bred. It would appear that there is a large degree of intermingling between the three harbours to such an extent that they can almost be considered the same flock but we still are unsure where the bulk of this flock spends



the winter months. This is a challenge for all northern North Island members for the coming year.

The waders at the harbours are now beginning to achieve some colour but at this stage there has been no real change in the numbers or types of birds present but a close watch will be maintained over the next two months as the birds begin moving northwards.

(David Lawrie)

## Waikato

It seems have been the time for many of the region's lakes to be looked at, with members getting out and about in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty. In January, Cambridge Lake/Te Ko Utu, provided a healthy Australian Coot population of 24, with four chicks. Forest Lake/Rotokaeo, Hamilton City's second largest lake, continues to provide regular comparison records to the main Lake Rotoroa, thanks to the efforts of Brian Challinor. Lake Rotoroa/Hamilton Lake springs the odd surprise upon us. For example, a Red-billed Gull in January, along with 13 coot chicks, and two Paradise Shelducks in February.

Three of our members helped out with the Rotorua Lakes Census, also in February. The main target was NZ Dabchick, which initial results indicate have had a good breeding season. Lake Rerewhakaaitu, for example, had almost twice the dabchick numbers of the last census, and threw in a bittern to top the day off! Northland member Simon Chamberlin has been back to Taharoa after many a year, and has some good waterfowl results from those Lakes; 139 Paradise Shelducks and 9 NZ Scaup on Lake Harihari, 13 Scaup on Lake Rotoroa, and a Fernbird at Lake Pototahu.

Other birds seen around the region include four NZ Dotterels rat-running at Steel Camp Creek, Taharoa, in December, five NZ Dotterels and 49 Banded Dotterels at Ruapuke Beach in January, and a Barn Owl at Matangi. Averil Soper spotted the owl, and provided an excellent description of its behaviour and flight. Alas, it has only been seen once more, by Averil's flatmate! A Barn Owl was apparently seen in the area some time ago. Bev Woolley reported a part-albino Wrybill recently at Miranda. The head, mantle and back were all white, with grey flecking toward the tail, which was grey.

Atlas squares are continuing to roll in, a good percentage being from out of our region, confirming we are really vagrants at heart!

Aside from the lakes, other field trips since the last edition of *Southern Bird* have been a further 5-minute bird count on Mt Kakepuku. Two robins were counted this time – it is not often that they cooperate within each five minute count. Only one was seen, an unbanded 'Kakepuku-bred' bird, who was singing exceptionally well for an under two-year-old!

Beach patrols have been primarily

retrieving Short-tailed Shearwaters – 10 since November. Also Buller's, Sooty and Fluttering Shearwaters, plus another Hutton's Shearwater. There seems to have been more Hutton's this year than any other since records for Waikato began. In December, Hugh Clifford picked up a racing pigeon that had run out of puff en route from Christchurch to Auckland, and had ditched at Taharoa. In fact, Hugh's dedication to pounding the ironsands has been paying off lately, with a huge Leatherback Turtle presenting itself cast onto Taharoa Beach on 14 February. At two metres long, any thoughts of popping it into the boot would have been instantly perished. An associated thought must have been the perceived chilly reception, had he got it back home, on St Valentines Day!

Members have been active over the summer, participating in gull-banding at Thames on New Year's Day, assisting briefly with NZ Dotterel nest sandbagging at Opoutere, and running field courses at Miranda.

(Paul Cuming)

## Taranaki

In mid October members went on a trip to the Tuihu Forest, about 20 kms east of Inglewood. Thirty bird species were observed, including robins – a first for that forest area. The December trip was to the Moeroa area, inland from Eltham for atlassing purposes. A local farmer reported seeing Kaka, parakeets plus hearing kiwi and Moreporks call recently. In January a highlight of a trip into the Moeawatea area, 40 kms inland from Waverly, was large numbers of NZ Pipits and Long-tailed Cuckoos. Members are enjoying the challenge of travelling in the back country for atlas records – as some squares have no road access the tramping boots may have to come out.

During October reports began coming in of migratory waders seen at various beaches – godwits, knots, Pacific Golden Plovers, Asiatic Whimbrels (two) and a Grey-tailed Tattler. The first Long-tailed Cuckoo was heard on 8 October. By December godwits were in many coastal areas. Over December/January the Waiongana rivermouth list included Turnstones, golden plovers, Wrybill (1), Banded Dotterels (50+), Black Swans breeding successfully and large flocks of SIPOs flying north.

November's beach patrol resulted in 112 wrecks of 12 species, the most numerous of which were Short-tailed Shearwaters. In January a patrol produced a Wandering Albatross and a Fiordland Crested Penguin.

Four Arctic Skuas were reported in the Patea area where White-fronted Terns are nesting on a rock stack. Four NZ Falcons were spotted flying over the Colliers covenant in late January, apparently, according to their behaviour, two adults with two fledglings.

(Rosemary Messenger)

## Manawatu

The summer period has been a rather disappointing one at the Manawatu Estuary, with many of the hoped-for waders just not arriving. Numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots have been about normal, but there have only been up to two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, no Pectorals and only one each of Turnstone and Curlew Sandpiper. Pacific Golden Plovers have been present throughout, but the maximum count of 13 does not compare well with previous years. Four Red-necked Stints have been loosely associating with average numbers (up to 30) of Wrybill. On the plus side, the Japanese Snipe has been performing well throughout the summer and an adult White-winged Black Tern was at L. Omanu for several weeks over Christmas, with another two – immatures – at the Manawatu Estuary in mid-December.

Sadly, after 11 consecutive summers, there is no Grey-tailed Tattler this year, so our old friend is presumed to have passed away. Maybe the snipe will take its place as the Manawatu regular?

Once again, through the 2000 calendar year, the Foxton Beach area has surely attracted more bird species than anywhere else in the country – we claim 87 this year, including Shore Plover and Australian Little Grebe as additions to the all-time list.

After two years as Regional Rep, Brian Tyler has stepped down. All members in the Region owe him a debt of gratitude for taking on the position at a time when no-one else was able to, and for doing such a fine job for us.

(Ian (Sav) Saville)

## Wairarapa

The banding at Onoko Spit before Christmas was a great success with 28 Caspian Tern chicks being banded, our best ever effort. After the Caspian Terns, Black-backed Gulls were banded and close to 120 more are wearing bands. The highlight of the day was when 24 Royal Spoonbills did a circuit before heading off up the lake.

An exciting sighting was reported in January, a NZ Falcon was seen sitting on a TV aerial in Takaha Street. The bird was a young one and has stayed in the area for quite some time. Its distinctive call upset some of the neighbours, but it cleared the area of sparrows. It seemed rather appropriate that it took up residence in an area of town known locally as the "Bird Sanctuary". A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo has been seen feeding in exotic trees twice, in the Lansdowne area, over the last few weeks. Its raucous screeching, size and colour make it hard to miss.

A pot-luck tea at the home of Miles and Janet King rounded off the year 2000.

20+ members enjoyed the pastoral setting and the general ambience resulting from good company and good food. Of the culinary delights, the Kings' sheep-milk

cheese had to be tops, closely followed, if not equalled by, Gloria Wong's legendary won-tons! We were then entertained and informed, by the showing of a video about the endangered English Barn Owl. Thank you to Miles and Janet, and a big thank you to Miles for his three years' service as RR.

On October 27 Mary Beauchamp had an unusual experience. The wind had died away completely after a storm with very strong winds had hit the southern Wairarapa. As she heard a screeching from birds on the roof, she looked out of the window and saw a very large bird alighted on the back lawn. She was amazed to see the unmistakable golden head of a gannet. At least two, maybe three others, were on the carport roof.

(Betty Watt)

## Wellington

How fortunate we are to have Kapiti Island pest-free and abundant with birds and accessible to the public seven days a week! 29 members and friends recently enjoyed observing some of the island's rarer species, such as kakariki and Takahe. Inquisitive Kaka entertained by perching on the heads of some of the party, to the delight of the ten children.

Vigilance is necessary, of course, in order to preserve what have been achieved. Our members have provided much of the skilled labour that is required for this monitoring, through our quarterly census, and more recently through a shorebird survey aimed at determining whether increasing human visitor use impacts on nesting distribution and density.

What is bird song, which birds sing and why? There were questions which were addressed at the December meeting by Ben Bell using sonograms and "wave forms": to illustrate. Again at the February meeting, Ben's expert knowledge was shared, this time on the subject of moult. What is the meaning of birds' moulting? What happens varies from species to species apparently. We studied a selection of dead sparrows, and were shown how to fill in the OSNZ Moulting Record card. Ben has offered some hands-on teaching in our mistnetting/banding training, which is being resumed at the Wellington zoo by Peter Reece. Thanks Ben for the two very useful sessions.

At the December meeting Ralph Powlesland showed a video clip of a young harrier flushing a Little Shag off eggs and young chicks. This is unlike anything he has observed in his two years' study at Lindale, he said.

The Karori Wildlife Sanctuary has called on the branch for volunteers to assist with a number of projects. Some members have commenced monitoring the calls of the Little Spotted Kiwi. Later there may be opportunities for help with radio telemetry of kiwi and Brown Teal, and to participate in the capture and transfer of robins and Bellbirds. We can look forward to a busy year.

(Rod Orange)

## Canterbury

Ten Canterbury OSNZ members headed into the Mackenzie Country for a weekend in early February to make a major effort to check out the region for the atlassing scheme. The group based itself at some borrowed baches in Twizel, and teams worked around the shores of Lakes Pukaki and Ohau. Most of the weekend's work was carried out within sight of Mount Cook. Black Stilts were among the birds seen and recorded. More work was done at Tekapo and Lake Alexandrina on the way back, and part-lists were obtained for many squares while travelling, with the help of a GPS system that regional representative Nick Allen has in his car.

One of the teams working on the summer wader count on December 16 sighted a Red-necked Phalarope. It was seen right out towards the end of Lake Ellesmere's Kaitorete Spit. When its presence was announced at the after match function — the annual barbecue at Colin Hill's farm — other members headed out for a look at a bird that has not been seen in the Ellesmere area for many years.

The Collins guide, which may now be out of date, says it was recorded at Ellesmere in 1929. A search of newspaper databases shows that one was seen at Roys Bay in Wanaka in April 1997 by a visiting English ornithologist. Previous sightings were all in coastal areas, and the last recorded sighting was at Washdyke near Timaru in 1961. The bird breeds in Arctic areas and the Scottish Isles and it is known to winter in the Pacific, in the seas adjacent to Borneo and north of New Guinea.

The Canterbury branch does not normally do not have an indoor meeting in January but New Zealander and long time San Diego resident David Seay was visiting, and there was a good turn-out to a quickly organised talk and slide show on a recent birding tour he had made to Chile.

Manawatu regional recorder Ian Saville visited Kaikoura late in January, and reported sightings of a Wandering Tattler at the end of the peninsula by the Red-billed Gull colony/seal colony area, and a Fiordland Crested Penguin.

Nick Allen reported a New Zealand Dotterel at the Ashley River Mouth on January 26. He said: "I didn't get very close or prolonged views, but the bird was banded either red or orange on the left leg (may have been 2 bands) and white on the right leg. The bird was quite orange on the breast, but this didn't extend onto the face." John Dowding, who has been doing a long term study of these birds, said he was just about certain he knew the individual bird. He replied: "I banded OR-WM (orange over red on left, white over metal on right) as a breeding adult (probably male) on Table Hill, Stewart Island in December 1996. It's always behaved atypically after the breeding season; virtually all adults on Stewart Island move to one of the three post-breeding flocks (Mason Bay or Cooks Arm on the island or Awarua Bay near Bluff in Southland). This bird always disappears

over the non-breeding season and doesn't go to any of those flocks, but turns up again on Table Hill in time for the next breeding season. It seems that it goes walkabout in the South Island during the off season. The clue came when it was seen at Wairau Lagoons (Marlborough) in March 1999 by Nick Dillon, a local OSNZ member there. Now it's been seen at the Ashley and I suspect it could be on its way back to Wairau. It would be good to know whether it does spend the winter camped at Wairau every year."

(David Clarkson)

## Southland

The Southland Natural History Field Club, formed recently to cater for Southlanders with botanical, ornithological, entomological etc. interests, is going well. This gives us a larger pool of people to help with surveys and makes meetings and fieldtrips more worthwhile. A whitehammer is reported from Waikaia.

We now have at least a partial list from 155 of our 485 bird squares. This is good progress but we would like to encourage any visitors to Southland to lend a hand, particularly if they are visiting the remoter corners of this fine province. I can provide forms and maps. We are particularly interested in any Southland records of grebe, coot, quail, pheasant and Cirl Bunting. The record square is Sandy Point, close to Invercargill, with 56 species. The Halfmoon Bay square looks interesting as well with 50 species including three penguins, skua and the saddlebacks on Ulva Island. An unusual addition to the landlocked Woodlands square was an Antipodes Wandering Albatross with a faulty compass.

A recent rarity is an Oriental Cuckoo. A fresh specimen was picked up after flying into a glasshouse at Riverton. All that way and smack! Its plumage is intermediate between the two forms illustrated in the field guide.

Awarua Bay hasn't had a lot of rarities this season. There was a record flock of 68 Red-necked Stints plus 17 Pacific Golden Plovers and a tattler amongst the more common species. There was also a probable Large Sand Dotterel but it was only seen once. Two banding sessions were held. 20 Caspian Tern chicks were banded on the estuary shellbanks and 120 Black-billed Gulls on the Oreti River.

It is pleasing to see that the programme to exterminate cord grass (*Spartina*) has almost succeeded and areas that were previously swamped by vegetation are now clear, although it will be many years before the raised hummocks created by silt accumulation around their roots break down and restore the estuary to its natural shoreline. A downside of the spraying has been increased wave erosion as the vegetation, 'softened' by years of protection from wave action by *Spartina*, is scoured.

(Lloyd Esler)



# WHAT'S ON

## Far North

6 May - 90 Mile Beach patrol. Ph. Isobella Godbert (09) 407 8058 or John Down (09) 407 8658..

20 May - east coast beach patrol.



## Northland

21 April - west coast beach patrol

24 April - east coast beach patrol

10 May - evening meeting, ph Janet Snell.

19 May - west coast beach patrol

22 May - east coast beach patrol

14 June - evening meeting

16 June - west coast beach patrol

19 June - east coast beach patrol

12 July - evening meeting



## Auckland

25 April - South Kaipara Lakes Dabchick Survey. Ph. Judy Bendall (09) 420-2734.

28 April - Fairy Tern survey. Ph. Gwenda Pulham (09) 480-5535.



## South Auckland

Evening meetings Papakura Croquet Clubrooms, Chapel St, Papakura, 7.45 pm.

28 April - Fairy Tern census, ph. David Lawrie (09) 238 8407.

8 May - evening meeting, Ostriches.

26 May - Wrybill census, ph. David Lawrie.

10 June - Firth of Thames census.

24 June - Manukau Harbour census.

Beach patrols - 21 April, 19 May, 16 June. Ph. Rob Wheeler (09) 299 7069.

## Waikato



Evening meetings, third Wednesday of the month (except January), DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 829 8215.

Lake Census - Rotorua/Hamilton - ph Barry Friend (07) 8436729. On every month

Rotokaeo/Forest - ph Brian Challinor (07) 8552561. On every month

Te Ko Utu/Cambridge - ph Paul Cuming. On every month

Beach patrols - Waikato west coast beaches - ph Paul Cuming

5 Minute bird counts, Kakepuku - ph Paul Cuming

## Bay of Plenty

2 June - winter wader census, Kaituna/Maketu area. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406.

16 June - winter wader census, Tauranga Harbour. Ph. Paddy Latham.

## Taranaki

Evening meetings - held at 7.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month except January. Ph. Barry Hartley (06) 757 8644. Field trips on first conducive weekend thereafter.

## Wanganui

Evening meetings, fourth Tuesday of the month, Davis Lecture Theatre, Whanganui Regional Museum (Watt St). Ph Tim Holmes (06) 343 6808

## Manawatu

Evening meetings - held every three months at the Lido Centre, Park Street,

Palmerston North, 8 pm.

Beach Patrols - 1st Wednesday of each month and on other beaches at irregular times. Ph Brian Tyler (06) 368 1489 for meeting times and places.

## Wairarapa

21 April - field trip to the Wilkinsons' farm at Ruakokopatuna outside Martinborough. Ph. Brian Boeson, (06) 304 9074

## Wellington

Beach Patrols Jean Luke (04) 293 5601

Evening Meetings first Monday of the month at 7.45pm, DoC offices, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Wellington Central Library.

Atlassing training sessions, various Wellington localities - 1-3.00 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month. Ph. Stuart Nicholson (04) 934 5940.

## Nelson

Monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month. Venues vary. Ph David Melville (03) 543 3628

## Canterbury

Evening meetings are held at the Spreydon Bowling Club rooms, Domain Terrace, starting at 7.30pm.

30 April - evening meeting - Bellbirds and New Zealand Pigeons.

Saturday 12th May, Pyramid Valley with Richard Holdaway. Ph. Nick Allen (03) 312 7183, email nick\_allen@xtra.co.nz

28th May - evening meeting - journeys through the United States.

Beach Patrols are usually held on the first Saturday of the month. Ph. Sheila Petch on (03) 348 1889.

## Otago

25 April - evening meeting, Otago Art Society building, 8.00 pm. Southern Crested Grebe.

21/22 June - Oamaru penguin symposium. Ph/fax Tony Hocken (03) 434 8188.

27 June - evening meeting, beach patrols.

27 June - evening meeting, South East Island.

## PLEASE NOTE

**Deadline for  
the  
JUNE Issue  
will be  
10 MAY**





In the year 2001, to celebrate our 25th Anniversary, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours will complement our regular schedule of over 130 tours with three special departures.

# 3 Great Cruises

worldwide birding & nature tours



Our guest leaders will add extra depth to two of these marvelous tours. Robert Bateman is one of North America's most highly esteemed nature artists, whose art reflects his commitment to ecology and preservation. His work is included in many public and private collections. Peter Matthiessen is one of North America's leading nature

writers and novelists. His adventures have led him around the world, and his 1979 book, *The Snow Leopard*, won the National Book Award. His most recent book, *Tigers in the Snow*, was published in 2000.

Join our superb leaders for an unforgettable experience of great birding and spectacular scenery.

## Bering Sea Cruise: Japan to Alaska

May 26-June 14

w/ Robert Bateman, Victor Emanuel, Kenn Kaufman, Peter Matthiessen & Barry Zimmer

## The Galapagos Islands aboard the Polaris

July 6-15

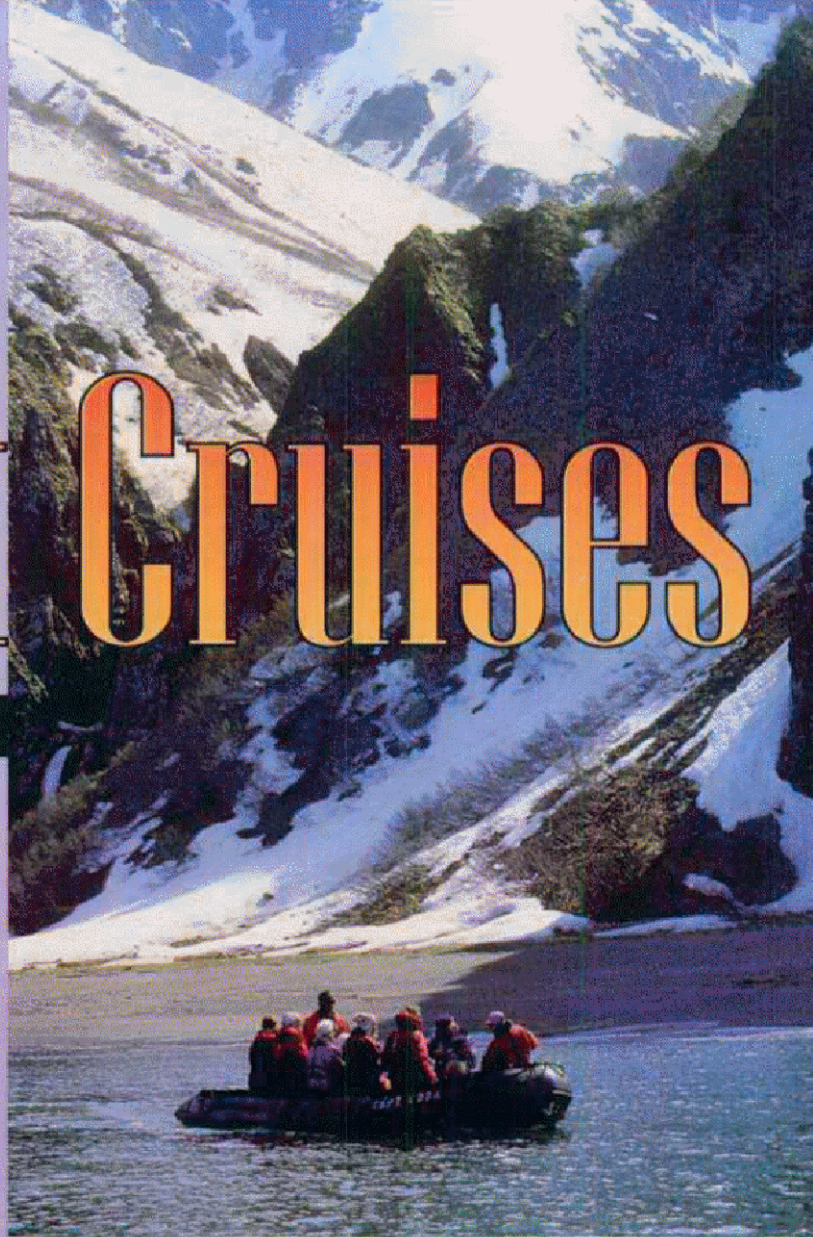
Designed especially for Families

w/ Victor Emanuel & Barry Zimmer

## Lords of the Antarctic, Emperor Penguins

November 22-December 20, departs from Tasmania

w/ Robert Bateman, Victor Emanuel, Greg Lasley & Peter Matthiessen



Post Office Box 33008, Austin, Texas 78764  
800/328-VENT (8368) OR 512/328-5221  
www.ventbird.com ■ info@ventbird.com

Photos: Kamchatka and Red-footed Booby © Peter Roberts  
Adelie Penguins © Victor Emanuel  
Sea Lion © Sven-Olof Lindblad/Lindblad Expeditions  
cst 2014998-50

**VICTOR  
EMANUEL  
NATURE  
TOURS**

