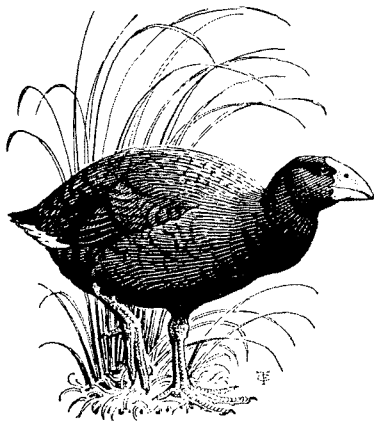


Southern Bird

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Quotation

*...In the pond
The finely checkered duck before her train
Rows garrulous...*

James Thompson (1700-1746)

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Cover Photos

Two excellent studies of Australasian Harriers feature on our front and back covers this issue. The front cover, photographed by Wayne Twyde, shows an immature bird, while the mature specimen on the back was captured on film by Barry Hartle.

Publisher

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We welcome advertising enquiries.

From the President's Desk

A number of events have taken place during recent months which I am hopeful will result in the establishment of strong working relationships between the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and the other organisations involved.

Birdlife International

I attended the first Birdlife International Pacific Regional meeting which was held at the Miranda Shorebird Centre over several days last April. I had been invited by the Birdlife International Secretariat in Cambridge, England, to attend in my capacity as President of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Birdlife International is a global conservation federation which seeks to conserve all bird species on earth and their habitats. About 33 delegates from across the Pacific, and from Britain, attended the meeting. They included representatives at the highest level of Birds Australia, Hawaii Audubon Society, Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (Ornithological Society of French Polynesia), and Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (Ornithological Society of New Caledonia). Our Council, at its meeting in Rotorua in June, was appreciative of the various opportunities availed of at the Birdlife International meeting to establish closer liaison between our Society and other organisations represented on that occasion.

It was obvious to me that the organisations represented at the Birdlife International meeting consider the Ornithological Society of New Zealand to be the premier authority on birds and their habitat use in our part of the Pacific. Birdlife International and the Pacific delegates present at Miranda clearly appreciated the participation of our Society in the meeting, and expressed the hope that an acceptable way can be found in which our Society will be able to provide Birdlife International with information which will assist it with bird conservation in our part of the Pacific.

I made it clear to delegates that the Ornithological Society of New Zealand is not a conservation organisation. Most of them were already well aware of this. Nevertheless, one of our objects is to assist the conservation and management of birds

by providing information from which sound management decisions can be derived. Our Society cannot become a partner or affiliate of Birdlife International. However it undoubtedly can, should it so wish, be of material assistance to the Birdlife International cause by providing objective and expert information about birds and their habitat use in the New Zealand region. No doubt there will be further developments in this area.

Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society

Another of the opportunities presented by the Birdlife International meeting at Miranda was to enable informal discussions to take place between myself and Keith Chapple, then President of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, about the desirability of developing a closer working relationship between our two Societies. It was agreed, *inter alia*, that there could be substantial benefit for New Zealand birds if the two Societies co-operated on issues such as the identification of possible marine reserve sites, important bird areas, potential Ramsar sites, and important braided river bird habitat.

As a result of our discussions, a draft Memorandum of Understanding between OSNZ and Forest & Bird covering the provision and use of information between the Societies was drawn up by Eric Pyle, the newly appointed Conservation Manager of Forest & Bird. The draft Memorandum of Understanding was considered and approved in principle by our Council at its meeting in Rotorua, and I was authorised to continue discussions with Forest & Bird with a view to concluding an acceptable Memorandum of Understanding between the two Societies, generally along the lines contained in the draft.

I was invited by Keith Chapple to speak at the Council meeting of Forest & Bird held in conjunction with its Annual General Meeting in Wellington in June. I took the opportunity to speak to that body about our Society and about the proposed Memorandum of Understanding. What I said appeared to be favourably received by the 100 or so persons present. The outgoing Executive of Forest & Bird had already approved the draft Memorandum of Understanding, but it still has to be



OSNZ now has a Scientific Committee

In his Annual Report for 2000 the President mentioned that a meeting convened by Kerry-Jayne Wilson had made recommendations to Council relating to a Scientific Committee for the Society. He expressed his confidence that at its next meeting Council would formally appoint the members of the Scientific Committee and settle its terms of reference.

That indeed happened. At its meeting in Rotorua on 1 June 2001, Council accepted the recommendations put to it, confirmed the formation of a Scientific Committee, settled its terms of reference, and appointed most of its inaugural members.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the Committee as settled by Council are:

1. To ensure the scientific rigour of studies undertaken by the Society.
2. To oversee the establishment of a national database for the Society.
3. To generally oversee Society studies of New Zealand birds and their habitats.
4. To ensure the appropriate and effective dissemination of information about New Zealand birds and their habitats.
5. To provide critical assessment and overview of the Society's schemes and projects to ensure that they have clearly defined purposes and contribute effectively to knowledge of New Zealand birds.
6. To maintain effective contact and appropriate collaboration with the Scientific or Research Committees of similar societies in the South Pacific region.
7. Generally to do all such things as are considered by the Committee or Council to be conducive to the attainment of any or all of the foregoing terms of reference.

Membership

There are to be five appointed members of the Committee, four of whom are to have scientific qualifications and be practising researchers, and one of whom is to be a "non-scientist" who will represent other Society interests. At least one of those five is to be a member of Council. In addition, the *Notornis* editor - or a designated member of the editorial board - and the President are to be ex-officio members with voting rights. The five non ex-officio members will be appointed by Council for a term of three years, but they will be eligible for re-appointment. The Chairperson of the Committee is to be elected by the five non ex-officio members from among their number.

The inaugural members of the Committee appointed by Council for a term of three years from 1 June 2001 are Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Paul Sagar, Ralph Powlesland, and Hugh Robertson. The "non-scientist" member has yet to be appointed. The Editor of *Notornis* (Richard Holdaway) and the President are ex-officio members of the Committee. Kerry-Jayne Wilson is Chairperson.

Proposed activities

The aim of the scientific committee is to promote research on birds in New Zealand and to make OSNZ the organisation that every person doing research on New Zealand and South Pacific birds will need to join. To do this we will promote ornithology conferences in this country, and other fora at which researchers can meet. These will be open to all members of the Society but unlike the Scientific Days their purpose will be places in which researchers meet to discuss research. We also plan to enhance the Scientific Days as



continued

formally accepted by the Council of that Society before it can be signed by both parties and become operative.

No doubt that will happen in time.

Birds Australia (RAOU)

I reported to Council at its meeting in June on discussions which had also taken place between myself and Graham Harrington, then President of Birds Australia, at the time of the Birdlife International meeting at Miranda. Ways of achieving closer liaison between our two Societies were discussed, including the role of OSNZ in the intended biennial Australasian Ornithological Conferences. It was agreed that there should be close liaison between the Scientific Committee of OSNZ and the Research Committee of Birds Australia. Accordingly, those Committees are to prepare an Agenda of items of mutual interest for discussion by them at the time of the first Australasian Ornithological Conference to be held in Australia next December.

NZ Fish & Game

The OSNZ Council meeting in Rotorua took place shortly after the NZ Fish & Game Conference in Timaru had, to quote from a newspaper report, "declared war on the degradation of lowland waterways, especially in Canterbury". It was reported

that the NZ Fish & Game Conference considered the threat to fish and bird habitats in Canterbury by large-scale conversion of land to dairy-farming and the abstraction of river water for irrigation to be so great that it resolved to set up a very significant "fighting fund" in an endeavour to preserve rivers and streams of good quality, and to restore those which had been degraded.

Council resolved at its Rotorua meeting that I write to NZ Fish & Game offering our Society's assistance - on a basis to be agreed - by providing or obtaining relevant information about the birds of our rivers and streams, and their use of those habitats, which would help that organisation with its efforts relating to the preservation or restoration of those natural features as important fish and bird habitats. I have written to both the Chairman and Director of NZ Fish & Game accordingly, and have also taken the opportunity in that letter to express my belief that our two organisations should have a much closer working relationship in matters of mutual interest than they have had in the past. I currently await their response.

DAVID MEDWAY
President

occasions where people doing research on birds (not just the professional scientists) share their new and exciting findings with the wider membership of the Society.

Over the last 60 years OSNZ has accumulated an enormous amount of information on birds in New Zealand. There have been numerous national and regional schemes, and groups of members have made regular counts of birds at key locations or followed the changes in numbers of certain bird species of interest to them. Some of this information has been published in official publications of the Society or in regional newsletters.

This bank of information is the Society's greatest asset, but it remains underused and much of it is still buried in notebooks and files. This resource is of value to members, to DoC, and to regional councils and other organisations, some of which would pay for its use. These data should play an important role in providing information that aids in the management of natural resources and habitats for the protection of our birds.

One of the most important roles of the Scientific Committee is to make the 60 years of accumulated data available to those who need it. This would be free or at cost to members, but at a fee for non-members and other organisations. To achieve this the Society needs to employ a database manager to convert 60 years of accumulated data into electronic form and then to manage its use. This obviously requires money and an office, and we can make little progress on this front in the short term. Council, with the help of the Scientific Committee, is investigating ways to achieve this.

In the short term the Scientific Committee plans to achieve the following:

1. Organise an "Ornithology in New Zealand" symposium to be held in conjunction with an upcoming NZ Ecological Society Conference.

2. Run scientific days at each OSNZ AGM at which some leading NZ ornithologists present jargon-free talks to the OSNZ membership describing recent research on birds.

3. The chairperson and if possible other members of the Scientific Committee will meet with members of Birds Australia's Research Committee at the Australasian Ornithological Conference in December to discuss trans-Tasman links.

4. We are considering reactivating the Checklist Committee with the intention of publishing a revised Checklist by 2005.

5. We hope to make a start on archiving data collected by OSNZ schemes, etc. It would help the Committee enormously if past scheme convenors and others with records notified Kerry-Jayne Wilson of the data they currently hold.

In the longer term, we may offer to host the 2005 biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference.

DAVID MEDWAY & KERRY-JAYNE WILSON



Korea - northbound spring migration 2001

It started fairly normally for many thousands of waders in the southern latitudes. Summer day lengths began to shorten and body weights steadily increased as migration day closed in.

For one wader - a Red Knot - leaving the south behind wasn't so easy; for another waderologist being part of the northward migration became reality and a wonderful opportunity to be alongside those who had just completed 9,636 kms using their own fuel supplies.

The kind invitation from Korea to have one Australian and one New Zealander assist in their spring migration count was made possible by Mark Barter and Doug Watkins who work tirelessly on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway encouraging countries to work together gathering data and understanding each others requirements to provide safe passage in the future for the many species using the flyway.

My safe passage was provided by Korean Airlines, whose support and that of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust made this trip possible.

Kum sa humneda. Destination Incheon, Korea 6 May 2001. Altitude c10,000 metres. After c10 hrs 30 mins flying and a short night, dawn was breaking, we were now over the southern part of Korea beginning our descent. I was pondering 'is this also how the birds see 'The Land Of Morning Calm' when they return each spring?'

The land was shrouded in morning mist as we made our final approach into Incheon, Korea's new international airport. Glimpses revealed an indented coastline pocketed with islands flanked by extensive mudflats, the habitat all waders rely on for refuelling en route to their breeding grounds. The shores of the Yellow Sea are the last estuarine habitat many birds will be using for two-three months before they return on their south migration.

I was met by Park Jin Young, a member of Kim Jin Han's Environmental Research team, and we promptly contacted Ken Gosbell (Australia's representative) who had arrived the previous day.

Our programme was to count a selection of major roost sites from 7-12 May along the western and southern shores of the country. Instead we made an immediate start and headed to Kangwha Island north of Incheon.

One of Korea's largest islands, Kangwha Island lies south of the Han River, the coastal border between North and South Korea. Effectively nowadays joined to the mainland by reclamation, its southern shores have extensive mudflats with a tidal range of 5.2 - 9.2 metres. Unfortunately much of the seaward shoreline is now seawall. With limited salt marsh, this means most of the birds must leave the area or use nearby paddy fields, shrimp/fish ponds or similar to roost, which, for some species also provides extra feeding habitat.

The nearby seawalls make good observation platforms, a theme which was repeated daily, a reminder of just how much reclamation has altered the coastline.

Two sites were visited along the southern part of the island. From the small fishing village of Sunduri we saw a good selection of waders including Dunlin (2,500), Terek Sandpiper (400), Far Eastern Curlew (1,600), Bar-tailed Godwit (150). Our first flagged bird was a Terek Sandpiper (yellow). The presence of a Peregrine Falcon on a rock groyne kept the birds alert, not that there's time for loitering when the tide rushes in so quickly.

This site is also known for Black-faced Spoonbill, and nine were perched some distance away on a rocky outcrop.

At Yochari the second (of five only) Red Knots I sighted was white-flagged (banded in New Zealand), a good find and a real surprise. Red Knots are not numerous in South Korea, their whereabouts along the flyway is not yet fully understood, so this sighting was especially important, to me - oh yes, we both made it to Korea! Good views of mainly Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica menzibieri*) with white rumps were also observed. This race breeds and migrates further west than the darker rumped race of *Limosa l. baueri* race (Eastern Russia and Alaska) of which the odd bird was seen.

A total of twenty species of waders was sighted from Kangwha Island and various waterfowl included egrets, terns, gulls and ducks, which often fed alongside the waders.

Yong Jong Island, 7 May - the vastly reduced mud flats to the south were once approximately 9,500 ha but since the development of the new international airport they have been reduced to 4,250 ha. The southern access road runs along the top of seawalls intercepting the upper parts of the salt marsh. Water still flows to these areas, so there is still some suitable habitat left for roosting, and local shrimp ponds are also used. It was very impressive when the bulk of c32,000 birds chose to roost in one site. This was an increase of 10,000 birds from when checked 24 hours earlier. It was not clear if this was the result of birds moving north along the coast or a shift in roost selection. Dunlin (17,500) and Great Knot (9,500) were the dominant species here.

The constant chattering and aerial displays of 180 Little Terns breeding on undeveloped reclaimed land, near the airport, were a real delight.

Next day the flooded paddy fields nestled between low hills at Choam were the beginning of Black-tailed Godwit country. This habitat was the most preferred for the species as we headed south. Wood Sandpipers and Long-toed Stints were also easily found in similar habitat, but not so easy were Common Snipe, their excellent camouflage and secretive nature making them almost impossible to find.

Namyang Bay had a nice, albeit small, example of how Korea's coastline may have looked before major reclamations began. Through the centre of the bay are deeply carved channels with extensive undulating mud pans alongside. It was most impressive as thousands of birds were continually arriving as the tide came in, eventually covering the entire area except the most upper reaches of the inlet. The placement of derelict army lookouts on top of the seawall was a great vantage point, but the cold sweeping westerly made scoping a little difficult, as the birds were most of the time a fair distance away.

The dominant species were Great Knot (32,000), Dunlin (21,000), Bar-tailed Godwit (5,600) and Grey Plover (1,840). To the south is a bombing range with frequent explosions and aircraft activity, which the birds happily ignored.

On 9 May we crossed the impressive 7.3 km long Asan Bay Bridge, a huge project and now a major tourist attraction, on our way south to Cheonsu Bay. SeoSan Lakes A and B were once the upper reaches of Cheonsu Bay. This reclamation is more complex than others as the deeper waters now form the lakes and provide the irrigation for an extensive cropping area, which previously was mud flats. This area is very important to wildfowl - during winter up to 300,000 ducks and geese can be present. We were fortunate enough to see 140 White-fronted Geese which usually vacate the lakes earlier, heading further north to breed.

Black-tailed Godwits are major benefactors of the reclamation project at SeoSan A, the lake we visited. During rice planting they are able to seemingly gorge themselves on the millions of seeds sown over the paddy fields, and as we saw, daily follow the aerial seed sowing across the fields. This has become a problem to the farmers and bird-scaring controls are employed to minimise the low rate of germination.

At the eastern end of the lake are some shallow sand flats which are used by other waders which come from the estuary to roost. The islands also have Little Terns and Kentish Plovers breeding on them.

The Mankyung and Dongjin Rivers flow into the Saemankeum Reclamation Project. If completed it will loose nearly 100% of the 30,000 ha of mudflats in the area. This is Korea's most important wader site. It has a wide range of tidal flat types from soft muds to sands and has the most diverse range of birds, a good reflection of the varying habitat types available. Specialist feeders like the rare Spoon-billed Sandpiper, highlight the importance of this area.

The Okku salt pans in the N.W of the Mankyung River are used when the adjacent mudflats are covered by the highest high tides, as was the case this morning (10 May). We took the opportunity to check the site on both the morning and afternoon tides. The early start took in the dawn breaking and the 0530 tide proved to be well worth the effort. It was the largest flock of waders I (and probably Ken) had ever seen or heard. The sounds and sight of an estimated 50,000 birds, which took flight briefly, was



truly breathtaking. When they landed we realised we had only seen half the flock take flight.

As the light improved and the tide turned, the birds quickly opted to roost outside the seawall, we were then able to realise the true extent of the flock. I had no hesitation estimating the flock at c90,000 but with the experience of Park Jin-Young and Yi Jeong-Yeon, we concluded that a figure of c110,000 would be more accurate.

Though this was a preliminary count the official count would be done on the afternoon tide where four sites on the two rivers would be counted. Not only was the tide predicted to be one metre lower, a change in roost selection was also predicted. This certainly did eventuate as only 19,000 birds were seen at Okku, and the salt pans were almost neglected, as the birds preferred the few hectares of exposed mud instead. The result of the afternoon count exceeded 149,000 and a number of flagged sightings made it a very successful day.

11 May - YooBoo Island - Keum Estuary (a five minute boat trip across the Keum River) has extensive mudflats joining tiny islands at low tide. YooBoo has a small population of a few families, who are mainly shellfish gatherers. It has had salt pans, which are now derelict and succumbing to vegetation. Modernisation is however encroaching, as a new seawall is being developed along a main channel. This area is a popular wintering ground for 2,500 Eurasian Oystercatchers (population c4,000); they breed here in small numbers on beachfronts. We located six birds and a single three egg nest.

Walking the mudflats, avoiding the many small channels that penetrated the flats, was difficult. They were very soft edged and steep, and even unassuming runnels were treated with caution.

Suncheon Bay on the south coast was our last site on 12 May. Enclosed by steep hills, it has 540 ha of highly valued reedbeds lining its northern shoreline. This area is better known as a wintering ground for Saunders' Gull, Greater Scaup and Hooded

Crane. We did see a lone Whooper Swan which decided not to migrate and a selection of other waterfowl like Teal, Common and Ruddy Shelduck and Spot-billed Duck.

I was hoping to get good views of Bar-tailed Godwit to assess the concentrations of the *bauerii* and *menzibieri* races in this area. This was not to be, as the 1000 birds roosted some distance from a suitable vantage point.

Korean wader study is relatively new in terms of record keeping. During peak spring migration, major roost sites are visited twice between late April and early May along the west and southern coasts, a formidable task considering the limited human resources available. We joined in the second count.

Traditionally, May records show a decline in numbers as birds have started their final stage of northward migration. This year May resulted in a 50% increase on the April count. The reason for this is not clear, perhaps the first birds to arrive were delaying departure or may even have arrived later than expected.

Of particular note was the depth of breeding plumage many of the birds had acquired since departing the southern hemisphere. The well-rounded condition of Bar-tailed Godwits suggested their departing the Yellow Sea was imminent. The same couldn't be said for Great Knots, which generally lacked the final touches to plumage and condition, and so were perhaps a week or more from departure.

At no time did we see 'Migration', birds taking flight in that typically excited state you get to know them in, though we could have been forgiven if we were left with that impression at Okku, a truly memorable event indeed.

The unexpected sighting of the white flagged Red Knot at Kangwha Island was a real highlight for me. It's these and other flag sightings along the flyway, which are so important for successful study of wader migration.

TONY HABRAKEN

Magpie study

Australian Magpies were introduced into New Zealand in the 1860s/70s to help control pest invertebrates in pasture. They were introduced into Auckland/Wellington/Canterbury/Otago regions but have slowly grown in numbers and are now found in most places (except the West Coast and around Farewell Spit)

People seem to 'love them or hate them'- there is not really any in-between!

Magpies are undeniably aggressive towards both humans and other species, especially around the breeding season. Many people also believe that magpies are limiting or preventing other birds from breeding in certain areas. There are many reports of magpies driving off, attacking or even killing and eating other birds (most as short notes in *Notornis*), but much of this is anecdotal and there has not been any science to quantify the impact that they are having.

Until now. Several regional councils throughout New Zealand have been reducing magpie populations in blocks of land, with the aim of measuring any changes in the density and diversity of other bird species, and comparing these results to areas where magpie populations are not being reduced. Any observed differences, however, between treatment and non-treatment areas in the density and abundance of other bird species cannot be interpreted as a direct response to controlling magpie numbers. While such an experiment would show whether achievable magpie control actually helps other birds, much more detailed research is needed to explain the mechanisms by which the observed outcome probably occurred.

In my study I hope to investigate the behavioural interactions that magpies have with other bird species, in particular focusing on aggressive and predatory behaviour. Ultimately, I will determine (1) the frequency and severity of interactions, (2) which species are targeted most often by magpies, (3) and the reason(s) why magpies interact with other bird species. The proposed study will help identify whether magpie behaviour has seriously negative impacts on other bird populations, which will influence the decision of regional councils in New Zealand to either continue or cease the current magpie population control programmes.

Wilson and Innes (1998) reviewed all available published literature on the Australian Magpie covering eight main topic areas: distribution, taxonomy, biology, social organisation, movements, food, impacts, and control. My additional literature review will expand on specific issues relevant to magpie interactions with humans and other animals. Particular attention will be focused on when the majority of interactions take place, what species are reported as being targeted most frequently, and the ecology and behaviour of the most commonly targeted species.

This is a request for readers to write back to me with accounts of magpie interactions with other birds. It doesn't have to be only aggressive interactions, as the non-aggressive ones, or ones where magpies are attacked by other birds, are interesting too. The more detailed information you can give, the better. Therefore, things like season, habitat type, time of the day, species involved etc. would be great.

This is a Regional Council Conservation Management Scholarship. My supervisors are Joe Waas (University of Waikato) and John Innes (Landcare Research).

The address for correspondence

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AGM Rotorua

Our AGM held in Rotorua on Queen's Birthday weekend was a great success with 105 people attending a wide range of activities. The majority stayed at the YHA KIWIPAKA which has excellent facilities, accommodation and conference hall.

Our thanks to all those people who offered and gave support which made our job a lot easier. Also to those members who couldn't make it for various reasons, but donated monies back into the Society funds. There were others who were entitled to refunds but refused to accept them.

Special thanks to Keith Owen for organising the Scientific Day and who had some outstanding papers presented, to CJRR for stepping into the breach to organise the atflashing squares, to Nan Rothwell for being a 'gopher' and being there when needed and to Janet Snell for the underhand way she beat the dishwasher into submission. Details for the next AGM at Hokitika will be in the December issue.

TOM & HAZEL HARTY



Twitchathon 2001

The best fun birding of the year. Ridiculously easy rules. Massive (and sometimes very ugly!) prizes. Improve your birding and driving skills in one easy lesson!

The third National Twitchathon is scheduled for any sunny day in October. Grab a couple of likeminded souls and you are in. It really can be quite excellent fun and all you have to do is identify as many bird species as you can find in a 24 hour period. There are no limits to how far you can go.

The event has a serious side, in that a conservation donation is made for every species seen, worldwide, in conjunction with Birdlife International. For that reason I would like everyone who sees endemic species (except for the really obvious ones) to submit an entry - even if the day total is not terribly high. It would be great to register all of our endemic birds.

The Mantelpiece Monstrosity will still go to the overall winners, but I have managed to wrangle a few real prizes to encourage more of you into the competition. There will be a prize to the team that gets the biggest score without the aid of a boat. Winners previously have each time done the Oceanwings pelagic trip from Kaikoura - the prize is two adult trips on Oceanwings! A copy of David Medway's wader book will go to the highest scoring team limited to 20 kms from a nominated starting point, and a copy of Don Hadden's *Birds of New Zealand* CD-ROM for the best team including more than 50% school-age children (so all you school teachers out there, get your kids into it). The rules are as follows:

1. a team must be two or more people.
2. two or more members of the team must agree the identification (by sight or sound) of each species.
3. only live, wild birds will count.
4. there is no rule 4.
5. any period of 24 hours in the month of October is allowed.
6. team members must stay in direct voice contact through the event.

It's as simple as that. If you want to be eligible for the "No boats" or "Less than 20 kms" prizes, annotate your entry to that effect. All entries, just a list of species claimed, to me by email, fax, phone or post (details below).

Nick Allen has organised the event for the past two years and his team has won both times (?). Brent Stephenson and I have come second both times, so now that I have taken over the running of it.....

SAV SAVILLE
23 Duke Street
Feilding
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binzsav@clear.net.nz

Wanted - wader counts for 1995-2000

In a recent article (*The Tattler* 28: June 2001), Jim Wilson showed that populations of some migrant waders in southern Australia had declined markedly during the past 20 years. Among the species most affected are some that also occur in New Zealand e.g., Lesser Knot, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and Pacific Golden Plover. In all of these species the decline in numbers during the period 1981 to 2001 has been over 50%, with the exception of Lesser Knot where numbers have declined 31%.

The declines may be due to some, as yet undocumented, habitat changes in southern Australia, poor breeding seasons in the northern hemisphere, or extensive habitat destruction in the Asian countries where the waders stop over to refuel when migrating.

Obviously, there is an urgent need to determine whether these declines are specific to southern Australia or part of a more extensive decline in the numbers of migratory waders. New Zealand is fortunate to have long-term count data for waders, since the establishment of the National Wader Count Scheme in 1983. A first analysis of these results, covering the period 1983-1994 has been published. Now, following the alert from our Australian colleagues, we plan to analyse the results for the period 1995-2000 and compare these with those of earlier years.

To make this analysis as complete as possible we need as many wader counts from around the country as possible for the years 1995-2000. For consistency, these should have been completed during June (winter) and November (summer). Many counts have been submitted to us already (notably from Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Nelson, and Canterbury), but there may be more still to be submitted.

Please send us your wader counts by 30 November 2001 so that we may determine as accurately as possible, any trends in the numbers of migratory waders reaching New Zealand during the period 1983-2000.

These should be sent to either:

Adrian Riegen, 231 Forest Hill Road, Waitarua, Auckland 8 or
Paul Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 8004.

Thanks very much for your assistance in this important project.

PAUL SAGAR & ADRIAN RIEGEN

Reportable Rare Birds

Council decided at its meeting in Rotorua that the current interim list of reportable rare/unusual birds (which is on the Society's website at www.osnz.org.nz) should be updated, and that the updated list be published both in *Southern Bird* and on the website.

The scheme has been running properly again for some time now, and many members have got into the habit of submitting reports of listed rare or unusual birds to the committee for its consideration. However, it is now appropriate to update the list so that only those species which are more truly in the rare/unusual category - either nationally or nearly so - are to be reported to the committee in future.

There are undoubtedly a number of species on the present list which no longer fall into the rare/unusual category. The White-winged Black Tern has recently been removed, and other species - such as

Little Egret and Cape Barren Goose - immediately come to mind as potential candidates for excision. It may be possible to reduce the number of species to be reported in future quite significantly without in any way prejudicing the unquestioned values of the scheme.

The committee has commenced the necessary review, and will be producing and publishing an updated list of reportable rare/unusual birds as soon as it is able. In the meantime, it would welcome any constructive suggestions or comments which interested members would like the committee to take into consideration during the process. Those comments should be sent to me.

DAVID MEDWAY
Convenor
Rare Birds Committee
25A Norman Street
New Plymouth

New Members

A warm welcome to all of the following new members:

Nathan McNally, Gordon Colville, Pat Beatson, Michael Beaumont, Elizabeth McClelland, Steve Wood, Lynn Jessep, Sean Millar, Hayley Meehan, Jonathan & Mary Mason, Jenny Christensen, Philip Crutchley, Graham I. Hunt, Judith March, Emily King, Mrs. M. Power, John Joseph Darby, Steve Hart, Rachel Johnston, Nick Peetz, Ilka Sohle, Martin Cleland. Re-joined: Richard Atkins, Rachel McClellan

Overseas: Delaware Museum of Nat. History

HAZEL HARTY,
Membership Secretary.



East Asian- Australasian wader flagging program

Under a Flyway-wide program small plastic flags have been placed on the legs of waders. Each country or region has been given a colour combination code. At the moment Alaska, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand are flagging waders.

The programme has been hugely successful in tracing the movements of waders, the timing of migrations of different populations, and the locations of breeding areas and non-breeding areas. It is clarifying many hitherto unanswerable questions about waders. The new knowledge is feeding directly into our understanding of the conservation needs of waders.

There are estimated to be about 60,000 waders which are alive today carrying flags. A massive increased effort is needed everywhere to search for flagged birds, and anybody can do it. There are still huge gaps in the search coverage in many places in the Flyway. Also, in some places people are becoming apathetic to looking for flags, simply because many have been seen before.

Every flag sighting is valuable. The more flags that are reported from one locality the more useful are the data, as they can then be used for calculating such aspects as migration timing, proportions of populations using sites, partial northward migration of immature birds, and much more.

Negative sightings are also of use and this has not hitherto been recognised. For example, the first stop-off location for many wader species from southern Australia is still unknown, so negative sightings from the northern coasts of Australia will prove that many do not stop there (which we suspect). Where then is their first stop in Asia? In many cases we do not know because we receive hardly any reports from SE Asia - does this mean they are not stopping there, or is it simply because they are not being looked for?

Details about the flagging programme, the colour combinations used, an electronic reporting form and who to send sightings to will be shown on the Australasian Wader Studies Group website at www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/index.htm. You will also now be able to report negative sightings on the form.

NZ Sightings should be sent to the Banding Office at Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington. A massive effort has gone into flagging the birds. Please can everybody throughout the Flyway also put in a massive effort into finding them again.

ROSALIND JESSOP (Chair, Australasian Wader Studies Group)

JIM WILSON (Chair of the AWSG Scientific Committee)

Wrybill census 2001

On the weekend of 26-27 May 2001, members of OSNZ undertook a national Wrybill census, in an attempt to determine as accurately as possible the total population of the species. The census was planned and organised by Adrian Riegen and John Dowding, with the help of OSNZ regional organisers, and carried out by many members around the country. The aim was to repeat the census that was undertaken in May 1994, when 5111 Wrybills were counted.

Past experience has shown that in May the Auckland and South Auckland regions hold about 90% or more of the total Wrybill population; in the two months leading up to the 2001 census, we therefore monitored Wrybill flock sites in these two regions to ensure that we were covering all the necessary sites on census day.

The weather was less than ideal for the census weekend, being windy and wet over much of the country. However this did not seem to deter counters, who made a great effort to cover all the known Wrybill roost sites. It should be noted also that conditions were very similar for the 1994 count, with gale force westerlies and rain in the Auckland area - one of the inevitable hazards of winter counts. As in the previous census, several of the larger flocks were photographed so that more accurate counts could be made later. Some important sites were also counted again over the following two weeks to check numbers.

The results show quite clearly that Wrybill numbers have declined significantly since 1994; provisional totals suggest a population in 2001 of about 4100-4200 birds, suggesting a decline of 18-20% in only 7 years. One of the possible reasons for such a large and sudden decline is that prey-switching has occurred on the South Island breeding grounds - since RHD was released to kill rabbits in 1997, mammalian predators that used to rely heavily on rabbits there are now eating more eggs, chicks and adult birds. In fact, the Wrybill was identified by a Department of Conservation report in 1997 as one of six birds likely to be at serious risk from prey-switching if RHD

was introduced. The results of the 2001 census are obviously of great concern and we will be writing them up for publication in *Notornis*.

However it is interesting to note a few comparisons with the 1994 count. The number of sites with birds in 1994 was 29 and in 2001 was 33; this increase may be partly due to slightly better coverage this time (and it should be noted that most of the new sites had only one or two birds, so made almost no difference to the total). All the key sites in 1994 had birds in 2001 but numbers did vary considerably at some sites. While the winter distribution of the species was broadly similar between the two surveys, there does appear to be a drift away from the traditionally largest flock site at Miranda, which has normally held over 50% of the population in the past. No new sites with more than 1% of the population were found in 2001.

Where to from here? The results of this census clearly show the need for monitoring of Wrybills to be stepped up. Accurate counts on the breeding grounds are impossible, so over the next few seasons we plan to count the key flocks in the greater Auckland region at least several times each winter. We will also be using the colour-banded birds in the population to improve our understanding of movements of birds between flocks and of flocks between roost sites; this will help us plan future surveys with more confidence.

We are very grateful to everyone who took part in the 2001 census. We hope that OSNZ members will support this important and ongoing project by continuing to turn out on wet and windy winter days to count Wrybills - we believe this is an excellent example of the contribution that the Society can make to the conservation of birds in New Zealand.

ADRIAN RIEGEN/
JOHN DOWDING

See photos on page 9

Free to Download

Euan C. Young. 1999.
*Millennium Bird. Cooperative
breeding in Chatham
Island Skuas*

This significant piece of work of
a long-standing and well
known study is now available
free to download from [http://
mysite.xtra.co.nz/~euany/](http://mysite.xtra.co.nz/~euany/)

Donations

The following members have
recently donated funds to the
Society- their contributions are
gratefully acknowledged.

John Bottomley, N.D.
McKerchar, Jim Jolly, Peter
Penny, Rowley Taylor, Geoff de
Lisle, Graham I. Hunt, Ilka
Sohle, Jonathan & Mary Mason,
Willie Cook.

HAZEL HARTY, Membership
Secretary



Limestone-Matakohe Island

Lying in the upper Whangarei Harbour stands a small island of some 40 ha called Limestone, or Matakohe to its original Maori inhabitants of the Te Parawhau hapu. The island now belongs to the Whangarei District Council and is administered by a committee known as FOMLI - Friends of Matakohe/Limestone Island. Formed in 1990, the committee's first priority was to get a Scenic Reserve designation placed on the island, and after eight frustrating years, this was achieved.

While not being immediately obvious, the conservation potential of the island is just starting to become apparent. As most are aware, New Zealand is made up of 700 islands. We are an archipelago cut off from the rest of the world, entrusted with some of the world's most unusual fauna and flora. Sadly that trust has been much abused. However, wherever there is an island in New Zealand, there is hope, even on the grass-covered slopes and limestone-crusted shores of Matakohe.

This last breeding season saw four NZ Dotterel chicks banded and at least ten Variable Oystercatcher chicks fledged. Of these, one was a pure albino oystercatcher. First spotted by the full-time ranger on the island, its albino status was confirmed by Richard Parrish, Fauna Officer with the Department of Conservation based at the Whangarei Area Office. Richard comments that albino Variable Oystercatchers are relatively rare, made rarer by these unfortunate individuals being picked on by their own kind, or being harassed by Black-backed Gulls and harriers. However, at



the time of writing the bird has moved from Limestone Island up-harbour to the Whangarei Port, where it is currently feeding and roosting on the inter-tidal mudflats bordered by mangroves.

Apart from being a small but important refuge for breeding NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers, Limestone Island has an important role to play as a future bird sanctuary. As Auckland expands and more money spills north, Northland is rapidly changing from a "third-world backwater" to a tourist Mecca for both New Zealand and overseas tourists. It is almost as hard to find a car park in Whangarei as it is in Queen Street. Sections around the Whangarei Harbour are going like hot cakes, which means Limestone Island will become a green refuge in a suburban desert.

Unfortunately at low tide the island is accessible to stoats and rats, so to counteract this, thirty double Fenn trap-sets have been strategically placed, plus poison tunnels grid the island. In the last two years, three stoats have been trapped. Currently the only undesirables on the island are mice, which are notoriously difficult to eradicate, though the committee is determined to do so.

Limestone Island is now one of the few places in the Whangarei Harbour to support breeding NZ Pipits. Fortunately for this species which prefers open grassland, at least half the island will remain in grass due to the important archaeological sites present. A well preserved pa sits atop the island, while the northern-facing slope is one of the last remaining examples of an agricultural drainage system that tells of the production of potatoes grown by Maori as a cash crop for the early European settlers of the Whangarei area.

Another avifaunal beneficiary of this large area of grassland could be introduced Takahe. The current population of this giant rail stands at around 200, and seems unable to increase any further. Graham Ussher of Auckland University has been looking at new sites in the hope of expanding the population of Takahe, and Limestone Island may well be part of the answer.

Other threatened birds currently found on the island include Banded Rail and Reef Heron. As the young forest grows and large flax fields are developed, the island could become a refuge for Fernbird, North Island Robin and the diminutive Rifleman.

Inevitably, before species can be returned, the habitat has to be suitable. To achieve this for forest birds, a planting programme organised by the Friends of Matakohe/Limestone Island has been



on-going for the last decade, with around 10,000 trees planted by volunteers each year. A recently produced management plan predicts that this rate of tree-planting will have to continue for another ten years to create a coastal broadleaf forest that will, one day, be able to accommodate species such as Kokako, Saddleback and Stitchbird.

As practical conservation activities increase in popularity around the country, more and more islands in particular are being restored and at least some of their former biodiversity values are being either enhanced or re-introduced. In Northland, Motu-o-pao Island near Cape Maria van Diemen has had rats removed from the island by the Department of Conservation to safeguard the remnant *Placostylus* snail colony. It is hoped to eradicate kiore (Polynesian rat) from Motukawanui, the largest island in the Cavilli group to benefit both wading and forest birds. Kiwi were introduced nearly ten years ago and are now breeding on the island.



In the Kerikeri Inlet the diminutive island of Coked Hat has had all its weeds removed and is home to several breeding pairs of Variable Oystercatchers.

Further south, I have been in contact with the group that is restoring Quail Island in Lyttelton Harbour. Tina Troup of Lincoln University has prepared an outline proposal for the restoration of

appropriate avifauna back to the island. Her paper starts with an account of the richness of birdlife on Banks Peninsula in the 1840s, when there was 80% forest cover and the peninsula was free of any mammalian predators. By the 1920s the forest cover had been reduced to a shocking 1% and predators were everywhere. She believes Quail Island is well situated for re-introduction of a number of species that are currently regionally extinct. The island is already one of the last refuges for the Canterbury White-flipped Penguin, whose numbers have crashed over the last 15 years.

Finally one need hardly mention the star of small island restoration in the Hauraki Gulf. In less than two decades an island that was predominately covered in grass and overrun with rats is now attracting thousands of tourists a year. I am of course talking about Tiritiri Matangi Island, home to our rarest of birds and an example to us all how professionals, iwi and volunteers can work together to make a huge difference to our unique wildlife. Here is a model on how we can capture the imagination of both New Zealanders and others who are moved by the beauty of nature. One is constantly reminded how fragile is the state of our naive birdlife, and it is often thanks to small islands and those who are restoring them that our birdlife has any future at all.

Meanwhile, back on Limestone Island, two kiwi have recently been released as part of the Kiwi Recovery Programme, and as part of Operation Nest Egg it is hoped six young kiwi chicks will be put on the island this November. If and when they reach the magic weight of a thousand grams, they will be taken to Bream Head Scenic Reserve near the mouth of the Whangarei Harbour and released to restore the lost kiwi populations there and at other sites.

Conservation is about using one's imagination and taking risks. It has taken both to turn Matakoho/Limestone Island from a paddock of buffalo grass into a potentially top conservation success story.

GERRY BRACKENBURY

Bird Recordings Archive

For many years now I have been making sound recordings in the field of most of New Zealand's bird species and have made copies of these available for scientific research at the universities and elsewhere on demand. This has opened doors for me and given access to sound recordings that would be very difficult to obtain unless one is continually living or working in the field. A number of interesting recordings have been archived with me through these arrangements. One series is a set of field tapes that formed part of the Ph.D study of Dr James Cunningham at Ilam some years ago into the Brown Creeper. More recent work includes Robins, North Island Kokako, and some items from the Chatham Islands.

At the time of the IOC here in Christchurch the opportunity arose to put together in a private capacity a Sound Guide to New Zealand Bird Song on cassette tape. This seven hour long series is still available and is about to be reissued in CD form. Much of the bird song in this series was published in The Wild South New Zealand Birds CD-Rom and on the TVNZ Encyclopedia. The Encyclopedia is about to be revised and updated for the 21st century.

In more recent years as the New Zealand collection approached almost full coverage, attention was switched to the islands of the Pacific with the idea of building up an archive of sounds from this region with its list of highly endangered bird species. Word soon spread with the result that not only my own material was made available but material from several other expeditions was donated for archival purposes as well. Material from most islands in French Polynesia is available along with some from the Cook Islands, Tonga, Kiribati, Samoa, and New Caledonia amongst others. Some restricted items from the Federated States of Micronesia are also archived here.

In more recent times material has been coming to hand from Bougainville

courtesy of Don Hadden who is on the troubled island with his wife. So far Don has archived recordings of the following species from Bougainville with us: Yellow-faced Myna, Steel Blue Flycatcher, Yellow-throated White-eye, Pied Goshawk, Ducorps' Cockatoo, Eclectus Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Brush Cuckoo, Willie Wagtail, Brahminy Kite, Metallic Starling, Reed Warbler, Purple Swamphen, Cardinal Lory, Pacific Baza, Beach Kingfisher, Blyth's Hornbill, Collared Kingfisher, White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike, Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Solomons Boobook Owl, and Koel. The list of first up or premier recordings is: Solomons Satin Monarch, Duchess Lorikeet, Bougainville Crow, Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Woodford's Rail, Blyth's Hornbill, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Solomons Cockatoo, Ultramarine Kingfisher, Midget Flowerpecker, Colonial Starling, Singing Starling, Bougainville Monarch, Cardinal Lory, Beach Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Bush Hen, Island (Grey) Imperial Pigeon, Fearful Owl, Solomons Hawk Owl, and Claret-breasted Fruit Dove.

Many of the species in the first list occur in New Guinea, Australia, and in Indonesia. For the most part, published recordings exist for these species even though different races and sub-species may be involved. The endemics from Bougainville have not as far as I am aware been recorded before. Certainly there are no published recordings available.

At present a CD/cassette is in preparation that will cover birds of New Caledonia with some of the above Bougainvillian species as a filler, under the title of Birds of Melanesia. For those who are interested a full list of the field recordings held and those that have been published are available on the web at this site: <http://www.geocities.com/archivebirdsNZ>

LES McPHERSON

Wrybill census 2001 - *photographs from page 7*



Wrybills in flight

At some roost sites, Wrybills form large dense flocks that can be very difficult to count accurately. Counts taken from photographs of these flocks in flight provide a more reliable way of estimating numbers.



Flock roosting on shellbank

The number of Wrybills in the large Firth of Thames flock has declined substantially in recent years. Although some of this decline is probably a reflection of the overall population decline, there also seems to be some change in winter-site allegiance, with more birds now using the Manukau Harbour.

AGM Minutes

Minutes of the 62nd Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of Zealand held at Kiwi Paka YHA, Rotorua on Saturday 2 June 2001 at 8pm

The President welcomed approximately 90 members to the AGM.

Apologies: Anthea Goodwin, Rob Schuckard, Rosemary Heather, Bell Family, Tenick Dennison, Tony Habraken, Shirley Nieuwland, Alan and Connie Wright, Adrian Riegen, David and Ruth Crockett, Michael Taylor.

Moved that these apologies be accepted.

Betty Seddon/Mark Nee. Carried.

The President paid tribute to several members who had died during the past year - Pauline Jenkins, Lou Gurr, Peter Rowley, Marie Simpson, Roger Chorlton.

A minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to those past members.

Confirmation of Minutes of 2000 AGM: The minutes of the 61st AGM held in Napier on 3 June 2000 had been previously circulated to members by publication in the September 2000 *Southern Bird*.

Moved that the minutes be accepted as circulated.

Kerry-Jayne Wilson/Chris Robertson. Carried.

There were no matters arising from those Minutes.

President's report: Previously circulated to members with the March 2001 *Notornis* and *Southern Bird*.

Moved that the President's report be accepted as circulated.

David Medway/Tony Crocker. Carried.

There were no matters arising from the President's report.

The President informed the meeting that Council had agreed to the formation of a Scientific Committee and had appointed its inaugural members. They

are Kerry-Jayne Wilson (Convenor), Paul Sagar, Ralph Powlesland, and Hugh Robertson. A "lay" member was yet to be appointed. The Editor of *Notornis* (Richard Holdaway) and the President are ex-officio members of the Committee.

The President advised the meeting that only one nomination had been forthcoming from members for the four vacancies which had arisen on Council. Lloyd Esler, the only nominee, was accordingly elected to Council leaving a need for Council to co-opt three councillors. The President announced that Ros Batcheler, David Melville and David Pye had been co-opted as Councillors for the 2001/2002 year. **Applauded.**

Treasurer's report: Previously circulated to members with the March 2001 *Notornis* and *Southern Bird*.

Moved that Treasurer's report be accepted as circulated.

Mark Nee/Nan Rothwell. Carried.

There were no matters arising from the Treasurer's report.

Appointment of Auditor:

Moved that John Mallinson Limited, Chartered Accountants, be re-appointed as Auditors.

Mark Nee/Chris Robertson. Carried.

No notices of motion for consideration at the AGM had been received.

Subscriptions are to remain the same for the next year.

Presentation of Meritorious Service Awards: The President was honoured on behalf of members to present Meritorious Service Awards to Betty Seddon, Peter Schweigman, Kathleen Todd and Chris Challies. The recipients were applauded as the Awards were presented.

General business

The President outlined events planned for the remainder of the weekend with particular reference to the Scientific Day on Sunday and the further field activities planned for Monday.

The President thanked Tony Crocker,

testimony to their courage, seamanship and extremely careful planning and preparation. Their tale is told in the recently published book, *'St Michael' Goes South*. This book, published by the Department of Conservation, is a well-illustrated and very readable daily account of the ship's movements at sea and while ferrying scientific parties around at the islands. The Auckland Islands along with the other four subantarctic island groups (Campbell Island, the Snares, the Bounties and the Antipodes) are a World Heritage site, which recognises their significance among the most important conservation areas in the world. Tudor captures much of the values of the islands in his very graphic descriptions of the wildlife, scenery, weather and sea conditions, and some of the history of these now uninhabited island outposts.

Copies of the book are available at a cost of \$35, from the Science and Research Unit of the Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10 420, Wellington.

Chris Robertson, Peter Schweigman and Bev Woolley for their contributions to the Society as retiring Councillors. The President also thanked out-going Regional Representatives for their efforts on behalf of Society members. **Applauded.**

The President announced that Council had decided the 2002 Annual General Meeting would be held in Hokitika.

Hazel and Tom Harty, as well as Nan Rothwell and others involved, were thanked for their efforts in organising a most successful Annual General Meeting and associated activities. **Applauded.**

There being no further business, the President closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Northland

Beach patrols on the West and East Coasts have continued in the hands of our capable organisers Prue and Claire. The April meeting was cancelled because so many of our regulars were away. One was in the South Island tramping over the Caples and Greenstone Tracks, and six others were on the Chatham Islands giving their time and effort helping with the Taiko project under the guidance of David Crockett. David is going back to the Chathams in September for about 12 weeks to carry on with the Taiko project.

At our May meeting we had Hugh Robertson speak to us on the recovery work being done for the Rarotongan Flycatcher, or kakerori, on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. Once again this illustrated the importance of eradication of predatory animals and of getting "on-side" with the local iwi and landowners. Out of the July meeting came ideas from Tony for the August meeting - namely that we could do with another telescope for the northern region, seeing that we have the funds. Members were asked to bring their telescopes to the August meeting so we could see and hear about their attributes and choose a brand for the region to purchase. Also an idea suggested by Tony, and warmly received, was to do some study on the calls of various bird species and make ourselves more familiar and more positive when identifying these birds.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Annual Conference at Rotorua and spoke about it at our July meeting. I thought quite a few useful points of interest and discussions came out of the RRs' and Council meetings.

The Northern Kaipara and Whangarei Harbour wader counts produced some interesting sightings. On the Northern Kaipara there were four White Herons seen at Weber's Roost, and in a paddock six Mallards sitting motionless. After many moments of deliberation the birdwatchers decided on decoys as the

'St Michael' Goes South

The 31 foot motor-sailer *St Michael* is a familiar sight to residents in the Eastbourne area of Wellington, riding at anchor in York Bay. What will be less well-known, however, is its illustrious history, including a lone-voyage to the subantarctic Auckland Islands, remotely located in the Southern Ocean, 500 km south of the South Island. Long-time York Bay resident, Tudor Atkinson, along with his brother the late Hal Atkinson and two other family members, Sam and John, undertook an adventurous voyage in the *St Michael*, in support of the 1972-73 scientific expedition to the islands. This was no mean feat in those days, given the need to navigate by dead reckoning through the notoriously stormy waters of the "Roaring Forties". That the Atkinsons accomplished this voyage, without incident, in the stout little ship, is a



appropriate identification. On Whangarei Harbour, two Whimbrels were seen - not an unusual sighting at other times of the year but they aren't normally seen here during winter.

(Janet Snell)

Auckland

Our June meeting followed closely on the AGM, from which members returned with enthusiastic accounts of a first-class gathering. A report from Rotorua by Ken Bond preceded the round up of local activities, with its news of the Wrybill census from Adrian Riegen and of robin translocations (from Pureora to the Hunua Ranges) by Tim Lovegrove.

Judy Bendall reviewed the South Kaipara Head lakes survey, where the score was New Zealand Dabchicks 83 (7 juveniles), Australian Little Grebes 41 (15 juveniles). Counts in the late 90s gave dabchick figures ranging from 25 to 66, with very few Australian Little Grebes, so a big change has occurred. Local sightings included Black Stilt at Tabora, 21 Royal Spoonbills at Shelly Beach and reports of the wintering flock of Little Black Shags.

Talks about far-away places with strange-sounding birds are popular items in our programme. We had an excellent presentation on the Falklands by a former resident, Nick Keenleyside. Situated at a latitude of 52° south, the islands - two main and 50 small ones - are almost treeless, with a windy climate moderated by their position relative to South America, which is the original source of much of the Falklands fauna and flora. Penguins, cormorants, skuas and other seabirds are a major element of the birdlife, besides endemic species or races of geese, snipe, heron and passerines.

At the July meeting Adrian Riegen reported that initial results from the May Wrybill census indicate numbers are significantly down. A full report will be published when all the data have been fully analysed.

The atlas squares are producing some interesting figures. More Kookaburras are around in the area north of Auckland than in the last survey 25 years ago. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are now in the Waitakeres. Also more widespread are Spotted Doves, Galahs and Cape Barren Geese.

Observations for July included seven Royal Spoonbills at Miranda and 109 at Mangere Sewage Ponds, and 31 Cattle Egrets at Parakai. The speaker for the meeting was Bruce Postill from DoC Hamilton, who spoke about his time working on South East Island in the Chathams, studying Shore Plovers and Chatham Island Petrels. He commented that there are more Harley Davidsons on the Chatham Islands per head of population than anywhere else in the world, but there are only a few kilometres of road!

At the August meeting Mike Lee gave a very interesting account of a biological

survey he had carried out in 1996-7 of seven islets off Waiheke Island in the Hauraki Gulf. At the time Mike was living on Waiheke Island and so was able to reach the islets by canoe. The islets are all less than 1.0 ha. Such small islands are often considered insignificant apart from navigational purposes, but his survey showed they can support a variety of wildlife. Breeding seabirds included Red-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Black-backed Gull, Reef Heron, Caspian Tern, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Shag, Little Shag, NZ Dotterel and Blue Penguin.

(Michael Taylor & Chris Thompson)

South Auckland

The long dark wet days of winter are gradually drawing to a close and we await the return of the Arctic waders in September. However the regional representative could no longer wait and will be spending most of August in the Galapagos Islands trying to separate Darwin's finches.

The meetings during this period have been dominated by speakers arranged by the RR during the Annual General Meeting in Rotorua. The June meeting saw Nigel Milius give the full presentation of his Antarctic slide show, a preview of which was shown at the scientific day at the Annual General Meeting. Nigel and Wendy are currently swanning around Australia so no doubt there will be further tales to be told on their return.

The July meeting was an opportunity for Rosalie Stamp from the Department of Conservation in Auckland to update us on some of her studies and also the work that she will be completing at the department. We look forward to working with her on various projects over the coming year.

Tony Habraken kept up his record of selecting the wettest and windiest day of the winter for the wader counts on the harbours in our area. The Firth of Thames census on 10 June was at least only relatively light rain but the Manukau census on 24 June was characterised by a deluge, particularly along the southern shore of the harbour. Luckily the rain did not arrive until near count time and most groups had a reasonable idea of the numbers of birds present by that time, as visibility became very murky after the rain.

There has been another sighting of the possible Black Kite, this time near Mangatawhiri, where another good description was obtained by yet another observer. Unfortunately the bird appears to be moving around a relatively large area and it is only going to be by chance that it will be seen.

There have been several sightings of a Little Egret in the Wharekawa Harbour on the eastern side of the Coromandel Peninsula. The Black-billed Gulls appear to be starting to gather in the Firth of

Thames and assume their breeding behaviour, so we are looking forward to another successful breeding season.

(David Lawrie)

Waikato

The Waikato Region fielded 14 members for the National AGM in Rotorua. Atlas squares in the region were given a good seeing to and, while a few teams thrashed around aimlessly in the scenery, a fine amount of fun was had by the majority of the us! Thanks to the Hartys and helpers, the weekend progressed like a shag through water, and it was a privilege to drive on the remote forestry roads.

The June local meeting was notable for its soundtrack and prayer flags, which embellished Bruce Postill's narrative of his sojourn into the back blocks of the Himalayas. His attempts to photograph birds amongst such beautiful scenery were admirable, if not always profitable!

The Kawhia/Aotea Harbour Census on 23 June progressed well with 15 attendants, and Aotea Harbour provided the highlight of the day with a lonesome Turnstone. Kawhia's spoonbills numbered 88, and seven Black Stilts were seen, including three colour-banded birds and a juvenile. The sandbank was noted as very low, and nesting shorebirds would be having trouble at high tides this summer. Thanks go to DoC, with two boats attending, plus the local Skipworth tour boat.

Four days later, Raglan Harbour was canvassed (very thoroughly by one team with a 4 knot max. throttle problem! At least they saw every single bird in their patch). SIPOs were the dish of the day with 453. Side orders were 41 godwits and two NZ Dotterels. Of concern were the continuing low numbers of Reef Herons - only one per harbour. There used to be a large breeding colony across from the Raglan Wharf, but these birds are slowly dropping off.

July's talk was a fascinating insight into the historical ornithological records from the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR). These were researched by the equally fascinating Owen Wilkes. The colourful early life of this man has to be heard to be believed, and his presentation was a telling record into what the Waikato environment was like in the mid-late 1800s. Garnering tidbits from Maori Land Court minutes, we gradually were drawn a picture of what birds were hunted, traded and where they were, sometimes down to a particular harvesting tree. Further installments of Owen's study are eagerly anticipated at a later date.

The talk prepped us well for our first full-scale field trip to do atlas square bashing. The AGM honed our map-reading skills, and they were put to good use around the northern King Country, the base being Mount Kakepuku. While



the 5-minute bird counts were being done, three teams sampled 1800 sq kms of countryside, each getting rewarded with either dabchick, Keruru or, in the case of the Waikeria team, jailbirds! The teams then gathered like a flock of pigeons around the Hoverds ranch for a pot luck dinner – this is a great way to collate sheets at the end of such a day!

August's talk was arranged at 13 days notice, as the planned speaker broke his collarbone during a rugby game. Andrew Styche provided an interesting insight into the rowdy Australian Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. These birds have been in New Zealand since early last century, and Andrew had studied them for his thesis. Although he observed tree damage from their massively powerful beaks, there did not seem to be many detrimental interactions between them and native trees or birds. Being very intelligent and wary of the human race, it was not easy to study the birds at close range, so a lot of observations were carried out some distance away in a draughty outhouse through a telescope. What a dedicated guy!

Andrew's talk enthused the folks who were going on Atlas Square Bash II. This time it was an assault on the Port Waikato area, 'home' for a good population of cockatoos. An excellent weekend was had, with good views of Australasian Bittern, NZ Dabchick, Kotuku, Spotted Crake and Cattle Egret (193). Stella & John Rowe kept the weekend's great reputation up with three cockatoos on the way home, while Betty Seddon and Martin Day wound their caravan through Limestone Downs, spotting a falcon for their adventurous efforts.

Other supreme efforts to observe birds were John Rowe dowsing himself in Waikaretu Stream, with 14 Spotted Shags spotted soon after, and myself disappearing into cavernous undergrowth resulting in a flushed bittern – and my pride! Over 40 species were seen in the Port Waikato square itself, including roosting White-faced Herons in the motorcamp. Thanks to Bev Woolley for locating the new farm containing the Cattle Egrets.

Atlas squares are being covered steadily, with the latest season's sheets being nearly an inch thick, testament to the travelling nature of our region's members. The Raglan square holds the record at 59 species.

Recent bird sightings include; Kotuku, one at Meremere in June; Black-fronted Dotterel, one at Kiritehere in April; Caspian Tern, three at Lake Rotoroa/Hamilton Lake, July; White-fronted Tern, one in the CBD, Hamilton, August; Kaka, three in Cambridge, April, one on Mt Kakepuku, June; Kakariki, four flying along roadside, Puahue, near Te Awamutu, June

(Paul Cuming)

Our programme of beach patrols has continued as usual. Not that there's

been a lot of dead birds to go for. In fact on the 140 km searched in the Waikato region from 1 January to 31 August 2001, we've found only 147 birds. There are a few more beach patrol cards still to come in for this period, and they'll add some more kilometres and some more birds to those totals. However it's unlikely that it will change the average of one dead bird per kilometre for the period.

So with such a small number of dead birds for the effort involved, why do we still go? Well, the first reason is that if we didn't go, we wouldn't know how many or how few there were, nor the species of the ones that were there. Many or few, it's all good information for the Beach Patrol Scheme.

The second reason for going is that we identify and count the live birds too, and these records are building up a valuable body of information. If we weren't there doing this, we wouldn't have seen the rarities (for Waikato Region) of two Black-fronted Terns at Taharoa in February, nor one Wrybill on the same beach in August. Now why was that lone Wrybill there? Had it slept in one morning in its winter quarters somewhere further north, and woken to find the rest of the flock had disappeared? Then looked in its diary and read "Fly south today". Perhaps still a bit confused it flew south and decided to drop in at Taharoa for a feed and a rest, hoping a flash of inspiration would tell it what to do next? Another recent example of interesting activity on the beach was a Red-billed Gull kleptoparasitising (stealing prey from) a New Zealand Dotterel. So you never know what you will see.

Do you want a third reason for continuing with beach patrols, whatever the result? Well, the fresh air and gentle physical activity, combined with the wonderful and infinitely variable coastal views, surely provide reason enough to be out there anyway.

(Hugh Clifford)

Volcanic Plateau

On 22 July a few members assisted Forest & Bird in setting up a NZ Dabchick monitoring programme on Lakes Rotoiti, Tarawera and Okareka. Results of the initial census were: Rotoiti 206, Tarawera 31, Okareka 33. This will be a regular event in July and December. The next count will be on 2 December.

Kiwi population monitoring has continued in Waimarino Forest, Raetihi. Operation Nest Egg is set to start with two nests being intercepted on 17 September. Eggs are destined for Rainbow Springs who raise chicks to a weight of 1200 gm, then chicks are released into the Karioi Rahui mainland island on the southern slopes of Mt Ruapehu. One juvenile female, caught by a log-hauling gang in February this year, has dispersed some 4.5 km since capture, and is now on farmland outside the forest boundary. Her bill length grew 15.5 mm in just five months!

She utilised the recent logging activity to her advantage, feeding on the freshly exposed soils wherever the hauler was situated. As the hauler moved, she moved with it, until habitat loss was at a level making continued occupation not worthwhile, so she headed across the Pipiriki-Raetihi highway into farmland, and is still moving.

Atlasing is continuing well, and we will be concentrating on eastern locations, where we currently have least coverage. I will be working in Rotoaira and Lake Taupo forests during the spring/summer months and will complete many squares, while I've got a permit to work in this restricted area. We still have considerable gaps from the Kaimanawa Ranges, and need to focus on this area, to complete our coverage.

Falcons continue to visit suburban Ohakune during winter, with very clear views of birds chasing passerines in neighbouring back yards. This has been a noted trend in the past three years. In Taupo also a pair of falcons have been observed nesting in a pine tree, in Banshaw Park, a suburban park 5 km out of town.

A flock of around 50 Rooks was seen on Turakina Valley Road near Tangiwai on 14 July, and reported to the regional council. The council tries to eradicate all rookeries in the region, as they pose serious threats to our market gardening industry. A small flock of five Eastern Rosellas was seen in the Makakahi Valley on 30 May. Rosellas are spreading around the Waimarino district, but appear to be still in small localised flocks.

October through December our usual haunts will be searched for the arrival of Banded Dotterels and any other waders that turn up within the region. RR Kerry Oates is retiring this December. As yet no one has come forward to take over the role.

(Kerry Oates)

Manawatu

This has been a rather quiet time for the Manawatu Region. The OSNZ group has been treated to a couple of excellent talks at our evening meetings, but fieldwork has been minimal through the early winter, with very few interesting birds seen.

The Manawatu Estuary has supported a Little Egret for most of the time, and a single Cattle Egret was also present in early August, but the most interesting bird has remained frustratingly elusive – what seems to be an Intermediate Egret has been seen a couple of times at Foxton Beach (though it has also been reported as a Great Egret), with a complete and detailed description from the observers.

Of interest to us on a local level, duck-shooters in the upper Manawatu Estuary reported unusually high numbers of Fernbirds this season.

(Sav Saville)



Wairarapa

Our May meeting was very well attended for Trevor Worthy's talk on moa bones. It proved to be fascinating and Trevor entertained us with stories about the various adventures he's had over the years searching for sites. Sand dunes will never be just sand dunes again. He has added another dimension to our trips.

Three cars full of members went on our field trip to Mataikona for the atlas scheme. The weather was fine with only a slight breeze. The fitter members walked along the sand while the others drove on to designated spots to pick them up and eventually on to the river outlet where they ate lunch.

Afterwards nearly everybody walked on and checked out the birds, but from a convenient log two Caspian Terns were seen chasing a Black-backed Gull away from above some rocks. This went on for quite a while until another two Black-backs joined the fray. The tables were turned then, when the gulls did very good impressions of skuas harassing the terns trying to get them to regurgitate their lunch for them. Over 25 species were seen on that trip.

Seven of our branch went to the AGM which was held in Rotorua and thoroughly enjoyed all that Hazel and Tom Harty had organised for us. Thank you, folks, from all of us. We look forward to the next one in Hokitika – in fact Colin has started to arrange it already.

After we left Rotorua we went on to Matata where we saw White Herons, then onto Waihou Bay where we spent the night. We were entertained by Tui and Bellbirds the next morning. The drive around the East Coast was beautiful in spite of the price they charge for five day old newspapers and a broken lock on a door waiting to trap the unwary. Te Puia Springs had a lake with Grey Teal in it which boosted the species seen. Next day we went on through Gisborne to the Mahia Peninsula where there was a heater of some distinction which gave our group a great laugh for the last night away. Thank you Colin.

I was very sorry to miss the June meeting when Bryan Welch gave a talk on the work he had done with the Fairy Terns while he worked at Auckland Zoo.

Our June field trip was to the Kourarau Dam and to cover more squares for the atlas scheme. One carload had their observations interrupted by a fisherman so went all the way out to Flat Point and another got slightly disorientated quite close to home. There weren't many birds around but the scenery was beautiful.

There was another good turn out for our July meeting when videos were shown. One was about the traumatic family life of woodpeckers and the others were historical, made on trips our branch had done over the years. It was great to be able to share these experiences with other members.

The film on pelagic birds was particularly good. This was taken when a few of us went out with a local fisherman and were able to see the birds so closely we could almost have touched them. It was good to see it again and try to remember the names of the species we had seen. I'm sure we need another trip out to sea to jog our memories again.

Another was taken when we went to the White Heron colony near Okarito amongst other places. The beautiful breeding plumes of these lovely birds were like lace on the video as they were in reality. Stunning! I noticed that we hadn't any shots of the Royal Spoonbills which were just starting to nest close by. I wonder if they still nest in that site? We should go back and check that out too.

(Betty Watt)

Wellington

As if there were not enough man-made hurdles to increasing the numbers in threatened species, we have this year been made painfully aware of a barrier that is intrinsic to the birds themselves: the existence of dialectal differences within a species. First there was Jeff Hudson at the Rotorua conference, showing how he had determined vocal variations in Kokako and explaining how these differences affect management of translocation, captive rearing, forced mating and other behavioural manipulation.

Then at our July meeting, in her report on the vocalisations and social organisation of Saddlebacks and Kokako which have been transferred to Kapiti, Stephanie Rowe identified 14 dialect groups of the former. And in the case of a Kokako, it appears that dialects formed at areas of origin have indeed acted as barriers to mate selection and pair formation. In isolation a Saddleback has been known to learn – and then model for others – the alarm call of a Tui.

The problem is such that one wonders if perhaps once day we may see high-profile communities such as the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary instituting programmes of language modification, for new and intending immigrants!

The Sanctuary is a very busy place. Quite apart from its extensive weed eradication, planting and other botanical activity, volunteers have been in great demand for feeding Tui, monitoring robins... even for walking the bird dog! 20 more Little Spotted Kiwi were released in July. Last week 40 Bellbirds and 40 Whiteheads were collected from Kapiti in the first ever attempt to relocate to a mainland habitat. This month, more of the same two species will be sourced from the Akatarawas, compared with Kapiti an unprotected environment, which adds an interesting variable to the exercise.

With so many opportunities to become involved, we appreciate the training in mist-netting and banding which Peter Reece has been providing at the zoo. More

than 25 enthusiasts, some of them tertiary students, have shared in the banding of a total of 638 birds, of 13 different species, including a Tui. The Kapiti and Akatarawa teams mentioned previously include some of Peter's graduates.

In a different training exercise on a recent evening, four members helped a group to improve their identification skills with reference to 30 common species. Participants included staff on the Wellington Regional Council, members of MIRO (the "mainland island" area behind Eastbourne) and of the Forest & Bird Society. We believe there may be other local groups interested in such educational opportunities.

In the meantime, Stuart, our coordinator in the bird distribution atlas scheme, continues to be available to anyone wishing to improve his/her bird mapping skills. Sessions are run every second Sunday of the month at a variety of interesting places, where time is spent observing local birds and learning how to fill in the atlas record sheets.

"Substituting for extinct species – how useful and how far can we go?" was the engrossing topic of our August meeting. Ian Atkinson pointed out that species substitution has occurred already, eg Black Swan for extinct New Zealand Swan, Australian Coot for NZ Coot, and Pukeko for Takahē. Future replacements could be Stubble Quail for the NZ Quail, the Rock Wren for the Bush Wren's niche, and the NZ Falcon for the Chatham Islands Falcon. The latter, said our speaker, should only be tried when and if the local bird population is robust enough to take it as a top-line predator.

Reference was made to species proposed in DoC's restoration plan for Mana Island. The concept of filling the gap left by an extinct species is a daring one, raising issues and concerns perhaps similar to these being expressed at present about genetic engineering. Thanks Ian, for a stimulating paper.

In the chair on this occasion was Stuart Nicholson. Our AGM accepted Ros Batcheler's wish for a change of Regional Rep., not aware of course that she would be co-opted to OSNZ Council at the Rotorua conference. Stuart came forward to take on the challenge of RR – thank you Stuart. And special thanks to Ros - the present strength of the region is testimony to her sound leadership.

(Rod Orange)

Nelson

It has recently been discovered that Blue Penguins are nesting under an old wharf adjacent to the Nelson harbour. This wharf is being revamped and the City Council and planners are considering how they can incorporate penguin habitat into the new design. In this situation the birds should be safe from dogs and other predators which threaten them along neighbouring areas of coastline.

Peter Gaze organised a day trip on the

first Sunday in August into the Marlborough Sounds, and 14 members boarded Les and Zoe Battersbee's charter boat at Waikawa for a very rewarding day, during which we covered 65 nautical miles.

The first pause was at the turbulent water off Cape Jackson where different currents meet and where many species go to feed. On this occasion there were Fluttering Shearwaters and diving petrels. As we cruised towards the northern end of Arapawa Is we were accompanied by a dozen common dolphins and enjoyed watching these beautiful animals cavorting and speeding around the boat.

We spent some time looking at the small King Shag colony of ten pairs on the dramatic White Rocks outcrops, the first time many of us had seen these stunning birds at such close range. Rob Schuckard has been making a study of the Marlborough Sounds King Shags for several years. Two adults appeared to be sitting on eggs while large chicks, including one apparent brood of three, were on other nest sites. To one side of the shag colony was a large White-fronted Tern colony site but during our visit these birds were elsewhere.

During the lunch stop on Motuara Is, a pest-free reserve, we saw Saddlebacks, NZ Robins, a Tomtit, NZ Pigeons, Bellbirds, a Grey Warbler and, at the highest point, a WW11 battery and fortifications. Following somewhat familiar sounds we found Blue Penguins occupying several secluded corners inside the buildings. DoC brings up to 10 Okarito Brown Kiwi chicks to the island each year. By 12 months of age the chicks are strong enough to defend themselves and are returned to West Coast forests.

An hour was also spent on Long Is, another pest-free reserve, where a population of Little Spotted Kiwi was established in 1983. More recently parakeets have been successfully relocated onto the island.

From Long Is we went across to East Bay of Arapawa Is and looked at a small gannet colony which was first occupied three years ago. There were about ten pairs with three adults sitting on nest sites, but it was too early for chicks.

In a nearby bay was a small Pied Shag nesting site and on Blumine Is we saw another, recently established, King Shag colony of 10 pairs. This was an excellent day and we hope to do another Sounds trip soon.

Henk Heinekamp recently observed a harrier that was banded in 1991 and a Dunnock he banded five years ago. A gannet banded at Farewell Spit in 1996 was seen this year at Hokio beach and another banded in 1997 was seen at Mutton Cove on the Abel Tasman coast. Little Egrets are occasional visitors along the coast and one was recently seen at Mapua. A Kaka has been sighted in the Brook Valley quite close to Nelson city.

Some of us hope to join Canterbury members who are planning Labour weekend activities near Blenheim.

(Gillian Pollock)

Canterbury

Attending squares got some extra attention from the Canterbury birders in late winter. The region has a huge number of squares – 480 of them – and for many of them access is very difficult. Regional representative Nick Allen went public with an appeal in *The Press* for people living in the backblocks, or venturing that way such as trampers, fishers, or four-wheel-drivers, to help with the scheme. It may prove to be the best way to get coverage.

Two weeks before the article, Christchurch members had gone into the area between Ashburton and Hinds and the coast, to complete seven squares. The largest total was 37 species in the square that included the Ashburton River mouth.

By late August, many Wrybills were returning to the region. An evening meeting heard that two pelicans, presumably Australian, had been seen and photographed in May near Lake Forsyth. Paul Scofield, the new Natural History Collections Manager at Canterbury Museum, reported that on August 24 a Barn Owl was found among containers at Lyttelton, presumably having flown ashore in the previous week from two container ships that had docked from Australia. Unfortunately, it died soon after its arrival and is being held in quarantine by MAF before being sent to Paul at the museum. This will be the sixth record in New Zealand, though only two arrived naturally.

The winter wader count in June had good numbers of Pied Stilts, but the Banded Dotterel tally was well down. Christchurch members also joined their South Canterbury counterparts for the annual Ashburton Lakes survey on July 28, and found fewer birds than usual because of the ice.

Evening meetings have included a talk on the project to restore the native flora and fauna on Quail Island in Lyttelton Harbour, a practical session on how to do the paperwork for the nest records and moult recording schemes, and an illustrated lecture by Paul Sagar on the birdlife of Campbell Island. The brilliant slides of Southern Royal Albatrosses on their nests were ample evidence of Paul's contention that as long as you are slow and careful, the birds will stay around and are easy to photograph.

(David Clarkson)

Otago

An aberrant Sooty Shearwater was among the large number washed up on Otago beaches over winter. The first impression was of a silver-coloured bird, the colour of a fulmar. A sighting of a Southern Crested Grebe on Lake Wanaka was a rare occurrence. It was watched as it dived with scapula for around 40 minutes.

Black-fronted Dotterels may be becoming more frequent in Otago. There have been several reports from coastal locations near All Day Bay recently. The penguin-viewing hide at Bushy Beach, Oamaru, was good for more than just penguins in July, when Alan Baker saw a pair of Gull Buntings there.

(Louise Foord)

Southland

Thanks to Lloyd Esler for his enthusiasm, encouragement and leadership over the past ten years as regional representative. I will do my best to carry on the good work, but those shoes are going to be hard to fill (literally!).

A recent feature article published in the *Southland Times* on the bird atlas by Lloyd has seen us field a number of calls from people with bird sightings and also wanting to help out with the mapping. We may even gain a couple of new members for OSNZ.

One interesting call was from the Invercargill Airport fire tender crew who had a resident bittern living in a drainage ditch around the runway. They also have a Little Owl living in one of the maintenance sheds, which keeps the mouse population in check – in turn the crew provides it with a roosting box.

Stewart Island, already an ornithologist's paradise, has a new species to add to the list. In early July Lloyd received a call from a tour operator who has had a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike around his property for the last few days. Photos have been taken and a rare bird report filed. According to the field guide, this is the third record for Southland, the others being in 1870 and 1976 respectively.

Sally Duston reports a pair of Blue Ducks at Hope Arm, Manapouri, on 13 May. According to Ian Southey, Weka seem to be increasing in Fiordland again after having been in almost undetectable numbers in recent years. Ian found them widespread during April in the Wild Natives, Pitt and Glaisnock Rivers. Reports from hunters indicate a much wider spread in northern Fiordland. Like Fantails these birds may be benefiting from the mild winters we have recently had.

The Red-crowned Parakeets, which were probably released intentionally at Otatara a few years ago, seem to be thriving, with sightings being made on a regular basis. Russ Dear has had three at a time in his garden, but they ignore any food left out for them. The large areas of protected bush around Otatara must be providing them with enough foraging.

Regular beach patrols have not seen a great number or variety of species of late, but a juvenile Australasian Gannet, picked up by Phil Rhodes in March on Oreti Beach, was banded at Cape Kidnappers in February.

(Phil Rhodes)



WHAT'S ON

Northland



- 13 September – evening meeting, birds of the Tuamotus
11 October – evening meeting
8 November – evening meeting, wildlife of Samoa
November (date to be advised), northern Kaipara Harbour and Whangarei Harbour wader counts
Beach patrols - West Coast 15 September, 14 October, 10 November, 8 December. Contact Prue Cozens. East Coast 18 September, 17 October, 13 November, 11 December. Contact Claire Burt.

Auckland

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45pm in the Kohia Teachers' Centre in the grounds of Auckland College of Education, 74 Epsom Ave, Mt Eden. Enter via Gate 2 and turn right into the parking building. There is ample safe free parking. Kohia Centre is the building on the other side of the carpark.



Waikato



- Evening meetings, third Wednesday of the month (except January), DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 829 8215.
22-23 September - field trip - springtime at Rangitoto Station, southern King Country
13-14 October - field trip - forest towers, ancient buried forests and Kokako at Pureora Forest
17 October - evening meeting, bird study in Whirinaki Forest
27 October - field trip - Whangamarino Swamp with OSNZ Auckland
17 November - field trip. Kawhia/Aotea Summer Wader Census
21 November - field trip. Raglan Harbour Summer Wader Census
21 November - evening meeting, David Lawrie on Galapagos Islands
5 December - end of year meeting
Further information, please contact Paul Cuming on 07 8298215, or paul.cuming@hcc.govt.nz
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 Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751

5 Minute bird counts, Kakepuku – ph Paul Cuming

Bay of Plenty

15 September - Lake Okataina. Meet at turn off at 11am. Ph. Narena Oliver (07) 542 0406

17 November - Otamatuna Mainland Island. Walk from Ogilvie's Bridge. Meet at the corner of Bell Road and State HW2 at 10.00 am

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 2nd Wednesday of February, May, August and November, at the Lido Centre, Park Street, Palmerston North, 8 pm.

Beach patrols - 1st Wednesday of each month and on other beaches at irregular times.

14 October - field trip to Ohakune/National Park for Blue Duck, Fernbird etc and twitchathon. Contact Sav for timing and further info 06-323-1441 or binzsav@clear.net.nz

Wellington

Beach patrols – ph Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Evening meetings – first Monday of the month, DoC offices, 4th floor, Wellington City Library, 7.45 pm

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

Mist-netting and banding, Wellington Zoo. Ph. Peter Reece (04) 387 7387.

Nelson

Evening meetings - usually 1st Monday of the month, 7.15pm, upstairs in Cafe Affaire, Trafalgar St, Nelson. Ph. David (03) 543 3628 or Rob (03) 576 5371.

Canterbury

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

23 September – Lake Selfe and nearby lakes. Ph. Marj Davis (03) 385 2193

24 September – evening meeting – travels in the UK

6 October & 24 November- Ashley River censuses. Ph Bev Alexander (03) 313 7009 or Tony Crocker (03) 313 4995 or t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz

20-22 October (Labour Weekend) - Canterbury members will join Nelson members in Blenheim for birding and censusing. Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 348 1889.

26-28 October – Hurunui Lakes census. Ph. Nick Allen (03) 312 7183 or nick_allen@xtra.co.nz

29 October – evening meeting - singing and food availability.

8 December – summer wader count and BBQ. Ph. Colin Hill (03) 325 5891 or cherryhill@xtra.co.nz

26 November- evening meeting – cats at Travis Wetland.

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

Otago

19-22 October – atlassing camp at Makarora. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041.

24 October - evening meeting, Otago Art Society building, 8.00 pm. South East Island. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041. Travels in search of petrels.

11 November – summer wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

Southland

Evening meetings (in conjunction with the Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at Southland Museum, field trip usually Saturday following.

PLEASE NOTE
Deadline for the December issue will be
10 NOVEMBER

