

homosexual and reverse copulations do occur, making short-term observations insufficient for accurate sexing.

Though the variables *nares to tip* and *bill depth* are remarkably stable over age and seasons, it seems unlikely that they will have the same absolute values for all populations. It is also doubtful that any simple set of cut-off points could be generally applicable, and we recommend that other workers derive their own cut-off values for the reliable measurements.

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### SHORT NOTES

#### SOME RED-CAPPED DOTTEREL RECORDS

The Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius alexandrinus ruficapillus*) has a curiously inconclusive history in New Zealand. Apart from an isolated record of an adult male collected near Waikanae in December 1878, its history is limited to that of, apparently, a single female that bred with a Banded Dotterel (*C. bicinctus*) in 1947 and 1950, successfully raising at least one hybrid young (Oliver 1955, *New Zealand birds*). It presumably bred also in the intervening years. This occurred on the Ashley River bed in northern Canterbury. On the ocean beach near the mouth of the Ashley River and, on one occasion at the mouth of the nearby Waipara River, an adult female was seen repeatedly in October-December 1955 but not in February-May 1956 (W. C. Clark & B. D. Heather 1957 in *Class. Summ. Notes, Notornis* 7 (3): 80).

More recent reports, as yet unpublished, of dotterels seen in the Ashley River area that were Red-capped, hybrids, or both suggest that a small population may still persist. I therefore wish to put on record several recent sightings of my own in case they will contribute to a better understanding of the species' status in New Zealand, once the situation in Canterbury is better known.

On 2 February 1963, at Lake Tuakitoto, South Otago, D. V. Merton and I saw a small neat dotterel, grey above, clean white below, which showed a faint reddish tinge on crown and nape and had sharply defined grey shoulder patches. Much smaller than nearby immature Banded Dotterels. We guessed it to be an immature female.

On 13 March 1966, a party consisting of D. V. Merton, Miss M. C. R. McIntyre, D. Bettesworth, R. Buskell, Miss S. Fogarty, and I saw at Miranda, Firth of Thames, a bird that was apparently a juvenile Red-capped. It was much smaller than the c.145 Banded Dotterel and single Mongolian Dotterel (*C. mongolus*) it was with. It was clean grey and white, with no trace of buff. Its face was conspicuously white, and its shoulder patches were disc-shaped, pointed, and clearly defined. On 25 February 1968 I saw another very small dotterel at Miranda that had a very fine bill, but no further description was taken. On 22 March 1968, R. B. Sibson (pers. comm.) saw a Red-capped Dotterel at Kidd's Bay, Karaka, feeding in a puddle with a stint and a Banded Dotterel. Its nape was rufous but not its crown. Its legs were black.

On 13 January 1970, I saw two birds among the Banded Dotterels at Karaka, Manukau Harbour. Both were small and with tiny bills compared with the Bandeds. One had a white face, a slightly rufous crown, and the typical well-defined part band or shoulder patch. The other was presumably a hybrid, rather slate-grey overall above, with no shoulder patch, but with a faint lower-breast band like that of many Banded Dotterels at this time of year.

On 11 February 1975 I noted one in a field with Banded Dotterels at Karaka, but a description was not kept.

To complete the record, on 7 December 1975 a single bird was seen at Karaka on the mud. It had no rufous markings (B. Brown 1976, *Notornis* 23 (4): 336).

One wonders whether these birds were stragglers from Australia or, among Banded Dotterels, from Canterbury.

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#### ACQUISITION OF A SPECIMEN OF THE NEW CALEDONIAN KAGU (CAGOU)

The Kagu, or Cagou (*Rhynochetos jubatus* Verreaux & Des Murs, 1860) is to New Caledonia what the kiwi is to New Zealand: a national emblem, endemic, at least partly nocturnal, almost flightless and a threatened species facing extinction as a result of reduction of its forest habitat and decimation by fire and introduced mammals since the arrival of European Man.

It is a kiwi-sized light blue-grey bird with a crude but prominent crest, strong beak and legs, and a piercing stare. Because of its small numbers, threatened status and occupation of montane forest areas,