

RECORDS OF BIRDS AT FAREWELL SPIT, 1974 - 1978

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INTRODUCTION

Farewell Spit is a slightly curved finger of consolidated sand extending 25 km eastwards from the north-west tip of the South Island (see Fig. 1, Robertson & Dennison 1979). At high tide the Spit is about 1 km wide, but at low tide sand-flats extending southwards widen the Spit to 8 km in parts.

Farewell Spit Nature Reserve (administered by the Abel Tasman National Park Board) is one of the most important wader localities in New Zealand and, as such, has been visited by a number of ornithological expeditions since 1961.

Edgar (1974), who summarised all major census figures up to 1974, listed 95 species recorded between Freeman's (now Lands & Survey) Farm and the tip of Farewell Spit. We have updated this list by the addition of new species (asterisked) and noteworthy records from recent expeditions. The area was visited in March 1976 (Edgar 1976), January 1977 (OSNZ/Wildlife Service course, attended by the authors), February 1978 (see Robertson & Dennison 1979), March 1978 (Bell 1978a), and October 1978 (Bell 1978b). Observations made by B. Robertson, the manager of the Lands & Survey Farm at the base of Farewell Spit are also included.

Localities and habitat zones mentioned in the text are shown in Figures 1 and 2 of Robertson & Dennison (1979).

- *FIORDLAND CRESTED PENGUIN (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*) A bird came ashore in September 1975 near the lighthouse. It was released about one week later (Edgar 1976).
- *ANTARCTIC FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialoides*) Several were wrecked on both the Ocean Beach and the Bay Flats during October 1978.
- *CAPE PIGEON (*Daption capense*) One seen offshore in January 1977.
- *NARROW-BILLED PRION (*Pachyptila belcheri*) Two found beach-wrecked on 13 February 1978.
- *REEF HERON (*Egretta sacra*) W. F. Cash saw one flying along Ocean Beach towards Fossil Point on 10 February 1978. Previously recorded at Puponga Inlet, about 10 km away (Edgar 1978).

- *GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Up to four seen in late summer 1976 (Edgar 1976); three on 14 March 1978.
- ROYAL SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*) March 1976, 16; May 1976, 21 (Edgar 1976); January 1977, two; July 1977, 17 (Falconer 1977); February 1978, five arrived on the 12th; March 1978, nine.
- CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) One in May 1975 and one in March 1976 (Edgar 1976).
- *SPUR-WINGED PLOVER (*Vanellus novaehollandiae*) First seen at the base of Farewell Spit in April 1975 (Robertson 1976a). Up to three have been seen regularly since March 1976.
- GREY PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) A flock of four was seen in January 1977, and four were seen on most days between 13 km and Mullet Creek during February 1978. March 1978, five; October 1978, two.
- NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL (*Charadrius obscurus*) March 1976, two; January 1977, two, including one in breeding plumage; single birds in breeding plumage were recorded in February 1978, March 1978 and also in October 1978.
- MONGOLIAN DOTTEREL (*C. mongolus*) Two on 14 March 1978.
- LARGE SAND DOTTEREL (*C. leschenaulti*) Two in January 1977. Two were seen in February 1978 regularly roosting with Bartailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) flocks near the 14 km mark (upper Mullet Creek catchment).
- WRYBILL (*Anarhynchus frontalis*) January 1977, 27; October 1978, one.
- ASIATIC WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*) March 1976, seven; January 1977, 19; February 1978, 14, normally at the western end of the Runway; March 1978, 23; October 1978, five.
- AMERICAN WHIMBREL (*N. p. hudsonicus*) One in January 1977.
- BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa* sp.) Brief sightings of single birds at Mullet Creek on 10 February 1978 (A. Palliser) and at 5 km on the Ocean Beach, 11 February 1978 (W. F. Cash).
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) One bird was closely examined feeding with Knots (*Calidris canutus*) and Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*) at 10 km in January 1977.
- SIBERIAN TATTLER (*T. brevipes*) One in March 1976 and two in January 1977. February 1978, two (nasal groove clearly seen); March 1978, one.
- *TEREK SANDPIPER (*Xenus cinereus*) One in January 1977 at the Runway.

- SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER (*Calidris acuminata*) March 1976, five; January 1977, seven. On 9 February 1978, four at the 8 km roost; March 1978, 10.
- *PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*C. melanotos*) One at the 8 km roost in January 1977 with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.
- CURLEW SANDPIPER (*C. ferruginea*) January 1977, five; February 1978, three; October 1978, one.
- RED-NECKED STINT (*C. ruficollis*) March 1976, four, possibly six; January 1977, seven; February 1978, 10; October 1978, eight.
- SANDERLING (*C. alba*) March 1976, one, possibly two.
- POMARINE SKUA (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) January 1978, one; February 1978, two (one pale phase and one dark phase); March 1978, one.
- *KEA (*Nestor notabilis*) Between September 1975 and March 1976, two, possibly three, visited the Lands & Survey Farm and the lighthouse (Robertson 1976b).
- *SWIFT sp. (*Apus* sp.) One was seen by a member of the March 1976 party.
- AUSTRALIAN TREE MARTIN (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) One near the base of the Spit, October 1978.
- BELLBIRD (*Anthornis melanura*) March 1976, one at the farm.
- *TUI (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) Seen by B. Robertson around the base of Farewell Spit when nectar-producing plants are in flower (Edgar 1976).
- *CIRL BUNTING (*Emberiza citrinella*) One male at the 4 km mark, October 1978.
- *ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) One visited the farm in December 1975 and remained three or four weeks (Robertson 1976c).

DISCUSSION

The checklist for Farewell Spit continues to grow, from 79 species in 1962, to 95 in 1974 and 109 in 1978. In addition Edgar (1976) listed three more species which have occurred between Puponga Inlet and Taupata Stream, 3 km to the south; these are: Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), and Fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata*).

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LETTERS

The Editor,

11 April 1979

Sir,

Mr Sibson writing on the correct scientific name for *Daption* (*Notornis* 25, p. 149) states that the authors of the current Checklist examined the question of genders very carefully. In view of the confusion which is everywhere apparent it might well be considered that their time would have been better spent replacing vernacular names for the 130 or so species from which they were removed by the 1953 committee.

Due presumably, to this lack of guidance most authors now ignore the Checklist and derive their own vernaculars, often with ambiguous and sometimes quite misleading results. In the resulting chaos it is frequently not possible, when a vernacular name is used, to know whether the reference is to full species or merely to a race.

When competent and careful professional scientists are forced into making such confused statements as "Pied Tit (*Petroica macrocephala*) . . . this species" (*Notornis* 23 p. 315) there is I feel something seriously amiss.

Those ambiguous birds "Australian Gannet (*Sula bassana*)" and "Black-fronted Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*)" are now so regularly reported and unquestioningly accepted that it seems only a matter of time before they join "Black Shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)" and "Pukeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)" as permanent members of New Zealand's avifauna.

I would earnestly suggest therefore that urgent consideration be given to a further revision of the NZ Checklist with the object of providing for all species both a scientific and a vernacular name irrespective of gender.

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