

During three visits to Westland, all in January, these are the largest gatherings of Banded Dotterels that I have seen; although on the evening of 5 January 1970 at least 20 were moving between the shingle banks of the Whataroa River and adjacent pastures down Flat Road. At Okarito between 3 and 7 January 1940 — and this involved walking the length of the boulder bank and lagoon both ways — W. Ridland and I noted only three; on 18 January 1961 I counted up to 6 near the rivermouth and on 5 January 1970 there were a few scattered among the stock which grazed the hummocky ground beneath which lie relics of one of New Zealand's deserted villages.

As breeding birds in Westland, Banded Dotterels are sparsely distributed on beaches, estuaries and the few suitable riverbeds. They have probably increased as European Man has thinned the forests and opened up the country; but short grass such as post-nuptial flocks favour is rather a scarce commodity.

The presence of flocks in winter suggests that some Westland Banded Dotterels are more or less sedentary. Peter Grant has reported (Classified Summarised Notes 1963-1970, *Notornis* Suppl. p. 48) that "a flock always winters on parks near Greymouth" and in early May 1976 P. M. Sagar recorded a flock of 20 on a paddock at Okarito township (*Notornis* 23: 337). The composition of these wintering flocks would be interesting to know. Do they contain any first-year birds? Are they made up entirely of adults?

The history and present status of Banded Dotterels in Westland could prove a fruitful field for research.

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REVIEW

Birds of my Kalam Country by Ian Saem Majnep and Ralph Bulmer; illustrations by Christopher Healey; published by Auckland University Press & O.U.P., 219 pp., 1977: \$17.25.

This is an important book of unusual distinction. It is destined to appeal to seekers after knowledge in a variety of disciplines and it will become compulsory reading for all who are seriously studying tribal languages and ways of life in that immense island, New Guinea. The appendices are invaluable and the indexing meticulous.

The two authors, nurtured in very different backgrounds, have been happily associated since 1963 when Saem, a Kalam boy aged about 14, but already a skilful hunter and observant naturalist, impressed Bulmer by shooting a Woodcock (*Scolopax*), a notoriously artful dodger, with a bow and arrow. Ralph Bulmer has been studying the Kalam people in the Central Highlands for twenty years; and being also an ornithologist of no little discernment, he has been especially interested in Man's use of the animals and plants provided by the forests and mountain valleys; for there is archaeological evidence that Man entered these highlands at least 15000 years ago. Bulmer defines four ecological zones in the Kaironk Valley Region, rising from 1500 m to 2700 m.

As an aid to clarity, different type-faces are used for the texts of the two authors. Of course, there were problems of language and interpretation. Saem, fortunately, is fluent in Pidgin and in conversational English; and Bulmer had acquired rather more than a smattering of Kalam. The authors thus switched backwards and forwards between Kalam, Pidgin and English as they worked together. Other experts or pioneers in Papuan linguistics were on hand for consultation. The resultant versions are a fluent English prose which is a joy to read.

In eighteen chapters Saem classifies the birds as he got to know them. Most of the titles are particularly apt, e.g. Birds that feed at flowering trees; Birds of the middle foliage; Birds that just fly constantly around; Birds of darkness, etc. Bats are treated as birds; but cassowaries apparently are not!

This substantial section is followed by six Kalam stories about birds. They should be read as Just-So Stories or Cautionary Tales, a mixture of weird fantasy and an earthiness which never becomes obscene.

Bulmer lists more than 200 species of birds reported from the Kalam country. Of the 95 non-passerines, 13 are hawks; 18 pigeons; 20 parrots and 7 cuckoos. The 107 passerines include 14 Birds of Paradise and 18 Honeyeaters. It is worth noting that *Eugerygone*, the Fidgeting Flycatcher, is placed not beside the gerygones in the Sylviinae; but among the flycatchers after *Petroica* and *Rhipidura*.

New Zealand naturalists, suffering from a historic lack of passerines, may well be green with envy. Moreover, Eurasia has come nosing into those cool highlands with *Motacilla*, *Saxicola*, *Phylloscopus*, *Lanius*, *Oriolus*. The roding of Woodcocks may be heard in the forests of beech (*Nothofagus*) and Common Sandpipers may visit the rivers.

The authors have been lucky both in their illustrator and with their publisher. Full marks to Christopher Healey for his admirable drawings in black and white; and to the craftsmen at the Auckland University Press.

New Zealanders are being urged to broaden their horizons and look out into the Pacific. Some have clearly been so doing for many years. This meaty and original book, scholarly and finely finished, should stimulate others.

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