

MANAWATU — (a) RANGITIKEI ESTUARY

GIANT PETREL — 1 seen offshore on 26/4/62.

FAIRY PRION — 1 flying close along shore on 17/3/62.

SOOTY SHEARWATER — c. 12 flying back and forth offshore on 17/3/62, not going in any specific direction.

GANNET — Odd birds fishing in summer and autumn; 1 on 2/1/62, 3 on 17/3/62, 2 on 26/4/62.

BLACK SHAG — Present throughout year, reached maximum in March; 24 on 17/3/62.

LITTLE SHAG — Highest counts 9 on 17/3/62 and 25/4/62.

WHITE-FACED HERON — About 3 or 4 throughout the year in the estuary proper, others further up river.

GREY DUCK AND MALLARD — More Grey Ducks than usual in the autumn influx: 120 Grey Ducks and 30 Mallards on 17/3/62.

The Grey Ducks had nearly all departed by 25/4/62, and by 17/3/62 only 10 Mallards and 1 Grey Duck remained.

GREY TEAL — 2 on 17/3/62, the first in this district for some years.

HARRIER — Usually 1 or 2 ranging about the estuary.

PUKEKO — Rarely seen, 1 on 25/4/62; commoner up river.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER — The first seen for 18 months arrived during January or early February; 4 were seen on 20/2/62; 7 on 17/3/62; 4 in April and finally 6 through June, July and to 29/9/62.

N.I. (VARIABLE) OYSTERCATCHER — Pattern similar to last year: About 14 through December 1961 to March 1962; 27 on 26/4/62; 17 on 14/7/62; 2 on 29/9/62.

GOLDEN PLOVER — 7 present by 28/10/61; 11 on 2/1/62; 4 on 17/3/62, one in full breeding plumage; none on 25/4/62; 2 in eclipse plumage back by 29/9/62.

BANDED DOTTEREL — Pattern similar to last year, with maximum of 130 on 20/2/62; winter population maintained till June (112 on 17/6/62).

WRYBILL — 1961 winter population had decreased to 3 by 28/10/61, and none on 22/12/61. Return migration commenced by New Year, with 3 on 2/1/62, 17 on 20/2/62; winter population of 22 through March to June, decreased to 10 by 29/9/62.

ASIATIC WHIMBREL — 1 present from 22/12/61 to 17/3/62.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT — Smaller numbers than over the last two years: summer population reached maximum of 45 in December-January. During 1961 the river changed its course slightly, apparently somewhat reducing the area of mudflat, and with it the food supply. This may have affected a number of bird species. 35 on 20/2/62 and 17/3/62; 3 on 26/4/62; first return migrants, all in eclipse plumage, 16 on 29/9/62.

KNOT — 8 on 28/10/61, 1 on 2/1/62; no others seen during the year.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER — 2 on 28/10/61; none seen since.

RED-NECKED STINT — 1961 winter population of 2 increased to 3 on 28/10/61, 6 from 22/12/61 to 20/2/62, when 2 were reddening on the foreneck; 1 on 25/4/62, none remaining through the winter. 3 had returned by 29/9/62, all in eclipse plumage, roosting with Wrybills.

PIED STILT — c. 15 on 28/10/61, 35 on 22/12/61; increasing to a maximum of 85 on 26/4/62, representing an increase on the previous two years' winter populations; 75 on 17/6/62; reduced to 20 on 14/7/62, 4 on 29/9/62.

SKUA (Sp?) — 1 harrying terns offshore on 17/3/62.

BLACK-BACKED GULL — Most remain on the coast; of c. 100 on 14/7/62, nearly all were on the beach or fishing at the rivermouth.

RED-BILLED GULL — 1 on 25/4/62, 4 on 17/6/62.

BLACK-BILLED GULL — Few present throughout most of the year, reaching a maximum of c. 100 on 17/6/62. None seen on 29/9/62.

BLACK-FRONTED TERN — 1 on 17/3/62 and 26/4/62.

CASPIAN TERN — No evidence of breeding anywhere on this coast, and numbers are generally lower in the breeding season; maximum this year, 16 on 26/4/62.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN — Some present on most visits from January to July. Highest count 650+ on 20/2/62.

— I.G.A., M.J.I.



(b) MANAWATU ESTUARY

GIANT PETREL — 2 fishing around bar on 7/10/62.

ROYAL SPOONBILL — None seen during summer 1961-62 till 24/2/62 when 4 were present; 10 on 25/3/62, increasing throughout April to a maximum count of 31 on 6/5/62. This probably represents more than half of the New Zealand population. Some of these moved elsewhere, as only 14 were present from 20/5/62 to 4/6/62. An apparent gradual southward movement was initiated about July, as 18 were present on 14/7/62 and 4/8/62; thereafter numbers fell to 15 on 26/8/62, decreasing throughout September to 2 on 29/9/62.

GREY DUCK & MALLARD — Highest count, 8 Grey Duck and 125 Mallard on 4/6/62.

SHOVELER — 6 on 4/6/62 is the only record this year. Commoner on the coastal lakes, where they breed.

HARRIER — One or two resident pairs take their share of the rabbits and of carcasses brought down the river; but no effect on the birds, except the not infrequent flushing of flocks of waders, starlings or finches, has been observed.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER — 6 on 7/10/61, 32 on 26/12/61; higher numbers wintering than in previous years, with a maximum of 55 on 19/4/62, and little variation from February till mid-May. A slight drop to 35 in June and July. 6 on 2/9/62, 15 on 15/9/62, 14 on 29/9/62.

N.I. (VARIABLE) OYSTERCATCHER — A small group present most of the year: 8 in October-December 1961, usually about 10-13 from February through May 1962. Thereafter the group appeared to move elsewhere or disperse, probably to breed on the coast. Only 1 seen on 14/7/62, 3 on 2/9/62, 5 on 29/9/62.

GOLDEN PLOVER — Highest counts were only 23 on 26/12/61 and 20 on 24/2/62. On several visits, very few or none were seen at the estuary, and it is thought that they spent some time on the paddocks or the riverbanks further upstream. Last seen on 28/2/62, none on 25/3/62 or thereafter till mid-September. First new arrivals 4 in eclipse plumage on 29/9/62.

BANDED DOTTEREL — c. 70 on 26/12/61, increasing to 200 from late February to the end of March, and c. 150 through April and May; dispersing to breeding sites after this, with 90 on 4/6/62, 11 on 2/9/62, and none from mid-September except a few first-year non-breeders.

WRYBILL — December to June, usually 5 or more present, with maximum of 14 on 24/2/62. A few at the nearby coastal streams at Hokio (7) and Himatangi (1) on 1/9/62 were on migration, and none were seen at Hokio or at Manawatu Estuary on 2/9/62 or thereafter.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT — 100 on 7/10/61, 260 on 29/12/61, 200 on 28/2/62, 100 on 25/3/62, 23 on 7/4/62, and about this number through to July. 15 on 14/7/62, which subsequently moved elsewhere, as none were seen in August or early September. First Spring arrivals came between 15th and 29th September; on this latter date 41 were present, all in eclipse plumage. All arctic migrants seen at this time were in eclipse plumage and may have been one-year-olds which wintered in northern New Zealand.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT — 1 in December 1961, not seen subsequently.

KNOT — As in previous years, the spring passage population had moved on by December: 22 on 7/10/61, 6 on 26/12/61, 8 on 29/12/61; 5 on 28/2/62 were the last recorded for the season, but no full census was made in early March. The first arrivals in September 1962 were 14 in eclipse plumage on 29/9/62.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER — 3 present from 26/12/61 to 7/4/62, by which date they had assumed very rich plumage; 5 on 24/2/62 and 11/3/62.

CURLEW SANDPIPER — 3 on 24/2/62, associating with Golden Plovers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers; 1 pale, 2 assuming breeding plumage.

PIED STILT — There appears to be a seasonal variation in population, which in 1961-62 followed the same two-peak pattern as in 1960-61: There was a post-breeding influx in mid-summer, with 155 present on 29/12/61. The birds dispersed about February, and from late February till early April, numbers this year did not exceed 35, with only 12 in mid-March. A rapid build-up to a second peak in April (120 on 19/4/62) was followed by a stationary period until June. A decline took place during July and August. The dispersal to breeding sites has not been closely watched and the times appear to vary from year to year. An irregular up and down river movement takes place during the early phases of this dispersal. Stilts are virtually absent in September. None were seen at the estuary on 2/9/62, 15/9/62, or 29/9/62.

SKUA (Sp.?) — One of pale phase, observed harrying White-fronted Terns offshore near Waitarere on 24/2/62 may have been a Pomarine Skua, judging by its heavy flight and build.

RED-BILLED & BLACK-BILLED GULLS — No clear picture of seasonal and daily movements has yet emerged, except for the departure of most adults about September, and their return about February. Red-billed Gulls continue to outnumber the Black-billed Gulls, although the reverse is true at Rangitikei Estuary and one or two of the creek mouths on the coast. On 4/6/62, 120 small gulls were

divided between the two species in the ratio of 5: 3. The highest mixed count this year was c. 160 on 25/3/62.

BLACK-FRONTED TERN — 2 on 20/5/62. No others recorded.

CASPIAN TERN — Maximum 25 on 24/2/62 and 25/3/62.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN — Present from December to May, up to 250 (25/3/62) coming into the estuary, and more on the adjacent coast (1000 on 29/12/61).

— I.G.A., M.J.I.



WAIMAKARIRI ESTUARY

Regular observations here began in October 1961, and it is hoped they will continue for some years. This report is based on at least one visit per month.

BLACK SHAG — Scarce. A single bird present in March.

PIED SHAG — Mainly a winter visitor. Max. 6 in March and August.

SPOTTED SHAG — Feeds offshore and roosts at the estuary. Max. 110 in March. Few during nesting season.

WHITE-FACED HERON — Max. 30, in January, when many juv. were present.

BITTERN — 1 in January in the southern swamp.

ROYAL SPOONBILL — 2 on 31/12/61 perching in a tree.

GREY TEAL — 1 on 13/3/62; 2 on 20/4/62.

HARRIER — Always a few; max. 8.

PUKEKO — Several in the southern swamp.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER — Always some; min. 12 in November; max, 853 on 30/6/62. On 31/12/61 an albino with eyes, bill and legs of normal colour, was present.

BANDED DOTTEREL — One nest found and many young birds seen. Biggest numbers in March (195), April (151), May (167), declining to 21 in August.

WRYBILL — No sizeable flocks seen. 4 on 21/10/61; 2 on 31/12/61; 3 on 3/3/62; 3 on 31/3/62; 1 on 19/8/62.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW — One present at least from 13/1/62 to 3/3/62.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT — 100+ on 4/11/61; 140 on 26/11/61; c. 157 December to February; 119 on 3/3/62; 79 on 17/3/62; 19 on 31/3/62; 11 in May and June; 0 in July and August.

KNOT — 9 on 8/10/61 3 on 26/11/61; 3 on 3/12/61; 9 on 31/12/61.

PIED STILT — Scarce in spring. c. 20 on 17/12/61; numbers increasing to max. 48-52, February-May; 25 in June; 6 in July; 0 in August.

BLACK-BACKED GULL — At least 2 prs. bred along sandspit. Increase over autumn to max. 390 in May; declining to 36 by August.

RED-BILLED & BLACK-BILLED GULLS — Generally Red-bills outnumber Black-bills, especially in autumn and winter; but proportions not worked out.

BLACK-FRONTED TERN — Scarce or absent in spring and summer; a few in autumn; 27 in June; 9 in July; 11 in August.

CASPIAN TERN — Usually a few. Max. 16 in January and March.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN — Numbers variable. Best counts were: 216 in January; 207 in March; 202 in May; 155 in August. At least one pair nested.

KINGFISHER — c. 7 along the inside of the spit on 30/6/62.

— D. G. DAWSON