

## FIELD STUDY COURSE, SOUTHLAND

### 18th - 26th January, 1962

The course was attended by twenty-six members. Many of these were residents of Southland, others travelled from Otago, Canterbury, Wellington, Manawatu, Gisborne, South Auckland, Auckland and the Far North. Eleven of the visitors camped comfortably at Witheford Hall, Otatara, kindly lent for the period by the Church Committee, and five were entertained in private billets.

The object of the course was to study the birds of coastal Southland from Tewaewae Bay in the west to Toetoes Harbour in the east—a distance of nearly 70 miles as the shag flies and very much further, if one takes into account the deeply indented coastline.

The most ambitious project so far undertaken by O.S.N.Z., it was a notable success. Southland R.O. Barrie Heather had devoted much time and thought to planning, organisation and map-making, and during the week was not only busy in the field by day but also worked late into the night arranging details of teams and transport for the following day's work. On hot, sunny days, everything was plain sailing, but when the weather changed and a succession of cold fronts brought rain, hail and high winds, the necessary adjustments to the planned programme complicated the organiser's task. It is a tribute to his efforts that so much was accomplished in so short a time, and so little left undone.

The total count of waders was just under 15,000 birds and about 10,000 of these were found on Oreti Estuary. Relative abundances, expressed as approximate percentages of total waders, was as follows:—

South Island Pied Oystercatcher	---	---	43½%
Bar-tailed Godwit	---	---	28 %
Turnstone	---	---	9 %
Banded Dotterel	---	---	8½%
Pied Stilt	---	---	8 %
Other wader species	---	---	3 %
			100 %

It seems that the far north and the far south of New Zealand are the areas most favoured by Turnstones. At some future date it may be an interesting exercise to work out the relative seasonal abundance of wader species in different parts of the Dominion.

A full report of the course is being prepared for publication. All that need now be mentioned are some of the highlights, such as a flock of 35 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at Little Waituna; 16 Curlew, 9 Stints and 5 Little Terns at Waituna Lagoon; a Greenshank at Oreti Estuary; and at Waimatuku River Mouth a White-winged Black Tern, a Wrybill and a Black-fronted Dotterel! Northern visitors were interested in the relative scarcity of Knots and Kingfishers and glad to have an opportunity to observe Stewart Island Shags, Spur-winged Plover, Black-fronted Terns, Little Owls and South Island Fernbirds. Patrols on Oreti Beach recorded remains of three species of Penguins, five Sooty Shearwaters and five Mottled Petrels, plus an assortment of

dessicated Prions. A Broad-billed Prion was picked up just before it died at Lochiel, 20 miles from the sea, and another flew aimlessly around over the tideline at Awarua Bay.

A feature of the course was the warm co-operation extended by Southland Acclimatisation Society. O.S.N.Z. members greatly appreciated permission to visit the Game Farm, and Roger Sutton was a tower of strength. We were glad, indeed, that he seemed to enjoy taking part in the course as much as we enjoyed having him with us.

A public meeting held at Southland Museum on 24th January was attended by 55 members of O.S.N.Z. and kindred organisations. The President opened the meeting and discussed results so far achieved, drawing attention to the value of this and similar organised study courses, which not only collect valuable information but also provide a useful basis for follow-up work by members resident in the areas studied. Mr. Kinsky spoke on the Banding Scheme, a selection of slides by Messrs. T. M. Smith, J. G. Timlin and B. D. Heather was shown, and the meeting ended with a beautifully illustrated talk on Fiordland coast by Mr. J. Mackintosh.

All were disappointed at the absence on holiday of Mrs. Olga Sansom, who, however, performed signal service to the Society by contributing an article describing the aims and objects of the course to one of the local papers. Several press notices recording progress and findings appeared during the week.

Proverbial Southland hospitality was extended by Mrs. Linscott, Thornbury, whose house was a haven for lunching ornithologists on the day of the western beat; by Mrs. Lobb, Lower Matura, whose splendid aviary was a delight to visit; and by Mrs. Barlow, Invercargill, who turned her house into a conference room for one of the most rewarding discussion groups of the week. To these ladies and to those others who in so many ways helped to make the course successful and the camp enjoyable, the Society tenders its grateful thanks.

— A.T.E.



## **REPORT OF DELEGATE TO INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS at Ithaca, New York, 16th - 24th June, 1962**

I have the honour to report that I was able to attend this Congress accredited as a delegate of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. I was also in my capacity as a member of the International Committee of the Congress, required to attend the pre-Sessional and post-Sessional meetings of that Committee, at which a decision was made that the next Congress would be held in the United Kingdom, Dr. David Lack, President.

The Congress was attended by about 800 delegates, all of whom were comfortably housed in the campus buildings of Cornell University. Generally, facilities and organisation were excellent throughout.

The large number of papers necessitated the holding of three concurrent sessions which meant of course that no participant could possibly attend all the sessions of interest and it was at times difficult to make a selection. However, there were some attempts at grouping