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SHORT NOTE

AN UNUSUAL DOTTEREL NEAR NEW PLYMOUTH

In the late afternoon of 17/4/65, my wife and I noticed an unusual dotterel feeding on a small, slightly muddy sandbank at the estuary of the Waiongona River, 7 miles north of New Plymouth. As we were on the opposite bank, distance as well as poor lighting conditions made it impossible to attempt to photograph the bird. However, a diagram made at the time to show the main features, when compared with the plates in Notornis VIII, 251-2, leaves little doubt that it was *Charadrius leschenaulti*.

Being familiar with both the N.Z. Dotterel (*C. obscurus*) and the Banded Dotterel (*C. bicinctus*), I placed this bird about midway in size between the two. Its most prominent feature was a dark brown to black band extending from behind the head to just in front of the prominent black eye. A slightly lighter band extended along the crown. The wings appeared to be mottled grey to brown, with a noticeable darker band. The under surface, chest and face were otherwise light in colour, a chest band extending only partly beyond the carpal flexure of the wing. The beak was dark and robust, and the legs appeared to be flesh-coloured.

All the time it was under observation, the bird was feeding by taking short runs and probing with the beak into the sand. It was noticeable that it did not indulge in the frequent bobbing of the head which is characteristic of the other two dotterels mentioned.

On our attempting a closer approach, the bird flew off and was not seen by us again.

— M. G. MACDONALD

[The summer of 1964-65 seems to have been a "good one" for the Large Sand Dotterel in New Zealand. Three were present in the Firth of Thames for several months. Two were reported from Kaipara in January and April. Later one may have over-wintered in Manukau Harbour. — Ed.]