

20/12/63: C. N. Challies checked the same area and found three empty nests and one containing two eggs. One chick was swimming on the lake (Challies, pers. comm.).

13/1/64: Macaulay Valley, above Tydall Downs (3,300 feet): Three juveniles were seen on the river bed, together with what was strongly suspected to be a recently occupied nest (I. Hamilton and W. Risk, pers. comm.).

The condition common to these observations is that the birds were nesting only in the vicinity of permanent water, whether it be tarn, glacial lake, river, or permanent stream. These records show that the breeding of Black-backed Gulls in the high country of Canterbury is a common occurrence. As the number of breeding records from each valley is in almost direct proportion to the amount of time the writer has spent there, it is probable that the total could be multiplied many times by additional field work. There is no reason for believing that the situation is unique to Canterbury. For instance, Mr. J. T. Holloway informs me that the frequency of breeding throughout high-country Otago, on the east of the divide at least, is much the same as in Canterbury. It can be confidently predicted that further investigation will show that this gull commonly breeds in most of the South Island mountains.

Because of the abundance of adult gulls in the mountains and the apparent frequency with which they breed there, the writer suggests that this region may contain a self-sustaining population which inter-breeds to only a limited degree with the coastal population. This hypothesis can be tested easily by banding.



WANGANUI LABOUR DAY WEEK-END FIELD STUDY 1965

Members met at Rutherford Intermediate School on Friday, 22nd October, 1965, to renew acquaintances and have supper while discussing forthcoming activities.

The weather treated us very fairly throughout the week-end.

Evening programmes consisted of: on Saturday, a slide showing of the Kermadec Expedition with commentary by John Peart and David Crockett and a Panel Discussion (Panel: A. Blackburn, H. R. McKenzie, A. T. Edgar) of questions raised by members. The Sunday evening programme was arranged in the Wanganui Museum, where members could view the collections, see a display of taxidermy arranged by Barry Tucker and discuss the week-end's observations.

Saturday, though fine, was very windy, with a south-westerly blowing in from the sea. This made observations difficult, particularly on Kaitoke Lake. Birds observed:

Waitotara River mouth and adjacent lagoon —

1 Black Shag, 9 Little Black Shag, 2 White-faced Heron, 27 Grey Duck, 11 Mallard, 2 Black Oystercatchers, 7 Banded Dotterel, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 5 Knot, 16 Pied Stilt, 50+ Black-backed Gull, 7 Pipit.

Marahou Lake —

20 Black Shag (+ a large colony not counted), 9 Little Black Shag, 15 White-throated Shag, 1 pr. Black Swan with 3 cygnets, 130+ Grey Duck and Mallard, 20+ Shoveler, 7 Pukeko.

Turakina River mouth —

2 Black Oystercatchers, 10 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Knot, 4 Pied Stilt.

Kaitoke Lake —

1 Dabchick, 50 Black Swan + 15 cygnets, Shoveler, Grey Duck and Mallard (number too difficult to determine under the conditions). It could be mentioned here that in June 1964, on this lake, 365 Shoveler (190 drakes) and 250 Greys and Mallards were observed on one day.

Virginia Lake —

5 Australian Coot, 1 Little Pied Shag, Grey Duck, Mallard and Mute Swan.

Sunday, a fine sunny day, provided members with an opportunity to drive up the Ohakune Mountain Road and enjoy the glorious views from the higher reaches. A survey was made of the bird life to be found in the beech forest approximately twenty minutes walking distance either side of the road (this distance varied according to the terrain). The following is a list of the species observed or heard. Each name is followed by the total number of it recorded and in brackets its approximate percentage of the total birds noted. They are listed in order of frequency recorded.

Grey Warbler 113 (31), Pied Tit 35 (9½), Chaffinch 34 (9½), Tui 33 (9), Rifleman 33 (9), Whitehead 25 (7), Waxeye 21 (6), Bellbird 14 (4), Blackbird 13 (3½), Pied Fantail 12 (3½), Parakeet 7 (2), Songthrush 5 (1½), Redpoll 4 (1), Greenfinch 3 (¾), Kingfisher 3 (¾), Kaka 3 (¾), Robin 2 (½), Dunnock 2 (½), N.Z. Falcon 2 (½), Native Pigeon 1 (½).

Species noted at checkpoints from high to low levels were the Rifleman, Grey Warbler, Pied Tit, Pied Fantail, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Chaffinch and Waxeye. Whitehead, Bellbird and Redpoll were noted at a high level but the larger number of each were recorded at the lower levels.

The gathering dispersed on Monday after lunch at Bushy Park, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Reserve, situated a few miles north of Wanganui. The following species were recorded by members who were returning home or "exploring" other areas in the district —

Wanganui River, rt. bank below Cobham Bridge: 7 Black Shag, 10 Little Black Shag, 4 Bar-tailed Godwit, 23 Pied Stilt (H. R. McKenzie).

Wanganui Wharves: 1 White-faced Heron, immature Red and Black-billed Gulls and adjacent to "Steelboats" 3 N.I. Pied Oystercatchers (1 black) (H.R.McK.).

Otorere Stream, Desert Road: Blue Duck (A. Cragg).

Wanganui members, who organised this week-end, thoroughly enjoyed doing so and trust all our visitors had an enjoyable and profitable ornithological week-end.

— ROSS MACDONALD