

## ANNUAL FIELD STUDY WEEK-END

### Manawatu, 26th - 28th October, 1968

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About thirty-five people met over Labour Day Weekend for an enjoyable few days in the Manawatu. On the evening of Friday, 25th, members assembled in the Deerstalkers' Hall for an informal get-together and supper. Here we were organised into parties for the field-work on Saturday.

Recent rains had raised the levels of local rivers to such an extent as to preclude the proposed censuses, so we concentrated on the coastal lakes and the estuaries on both Saturday and Sunday, meeting in the Deerstalkers' Hall in the evenings to report progress.

Each day we set off in parties, three or four to a party, setting off about 9 a.m. and returning for tea in Palmerston North, before assembling in the hall again at 8 p.m. for the evening meeting — all of us, that is, except for the Manawatu Estuary southern party, who on each day struck unexpected difficulties with the terrain. In all, sixteen lakes were visited, varying in size from Lake Horowhenua to small ponds not more than a few acres in extent. The estuaries visited were Rangitikei, Manawatu and Ohau, Manawatu as usual proving the most popular. We were very grateful for the assistance of Mr. T. F. Robinson with his boat under trying windy conditions at Manawatu Estuary, and to Mrs. Robinson for her hospitality to the party concerned. Boats were used by two or three other parties, but generally conditions were too windy for boating.

The windy conditions that prevailed had lasted for two weeks prior to the course, so a very rich reward was found by parties who patrolled the beaches. Full beach patrols were conducted from Waikanae to just south of Turakina — about 48 miles, with a total of 724 specimens recovered. The most numerous species were *Pachyptila* species (unidentified remains of 391 individual prions), Fairy Prion (130), Short-tailed Shearwater (88), Broad-billed Prion (38), Antarctic Prion (15), and Hutton's Shearwater (15). Sooty Shearwater (7) and Diving Petrel (5) were somewhat low; other petrels, with four or fewer individuals each, were Lesser Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Prions, Cape Pigeon, White-headed Petrel, and White-capped and Salvin's Mollymawks. Four Blue Penguins, three Black-backed Gulls, and a series of landbirds ranging from Long-tailed Cuckoo and Kingfisher to Blackbird and Chaffinch completed the tally.

The estuaries proved more or less predictable. As far as waders were concerned, Rangitikei and Manawatu had most of the arctic migrants, including a number of passage migrants which were on their way further south. Ohau estuary, on the other hand, had the local breeders — Variable Oystercatcher, Banded Dotterel and Pied Stilt. Arctic migrants recorded at the estuaries included Golden Plover (4 at Rangitikei — strangely absent at Manawatu), Long-billed Curlew (1), Bar-tailed Godwit (348), Terek Sandpiper (1), Turnstone (3), Knot (89), Curlew Sandpiper (1), Red-necked Stint (8). Wrybill (2) and S.I. Pied Oystercatcher (16) were the sole South Island visitors (humans excepted). Other birds included the usual shags, herons, gulls and terns, Pukeko, Harrier, etc.

The lake census was considered incomplete, owing to the windy conditions and the presence of a few waters that were not visited, while some species, such as White-faced Heron, Bittern and Welcome Swallow, were necessarily underestimated. Good counts were obtained of some species, however: Dabchick (22), Black Shag (27), Little Black Shag (12), White-throated Shag (57), White-faced Heron (5), Bittern (2), Black Swan (227), Paradise Duck (3), Grey Duck (16), Mallard (250), Shoveler (190), Harrier (30), Pukeko (150), Pied Stilt (60), Welcome Swallow (25). In addition, four suspected Pomarine Skuas and a Little Tern were seen at Lake Koputara on the Monday.

Two pleasant social evenings capped off the strenuous work of the day. On Saturday, Mr. Les Shailer showed us some of his superb colour slides of Royal Spoonbills, Swallows, Coots, Bellbirds and other birds, mostly photographed in the Manawatu. An interesting shot was of Cattle Egrets at Lake Horowhenua. On Sunday evening we were treated to a wine and cheese evening.

Farewells were said on Monday, with some groups again visiting local birding areas — either finishing off the work of the previous days, or looking for bush birds — Bellbird, Tui, Pigeon, Rifleman and Tomtit — in local reserves. Thanks are due to the organisers of the course, headed by the Regional Representative, Mr. Les Shailer, and to those other helpers, who assisted with transport, both car and boat, and in other ways in the kitchen and in the hall.

— I.G.A.



## THE BEACH PATROL SCHEME

By M. J. IMBER\*

New Zealand lies across thousands of miles of sea from the nearest continents, except Australia, which is just over 1,000 miles away. The Pacific Ocean washes its east coast, Antarctic waters are to the south, and the Tasman Sea to the west with the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans beyond. So it is not surprising that, with their widespread habit of migrating or wandering, seabirds from all southern oceans of the world have been recorded in the New Zealand region. Those who have been fortunate enough to study birds at sea know that certain identification of the species seen is often impossible, particularly with the petrel family. Then how have the rarities been detected? Very frequently by critical beach patrollers. To them we can attribute the only records for this region of the North Atlantic Shearwater (*Puffinus diomedea*) and Leach's Fork-tailed Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), both breeding in the North Atlantic Ocean, the latter also in the North Pacific; and the few records of the Antarctic Skua (*Stercorarius macconnicki*), one of the southernmost breeding birds in the world. Also the Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), one of the northernmost, has been found by beach patrollers on our coast.

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