

WHITE-FRONTED TERNS (*Sterna striata*) IN THE TASMAN SEA

On two recent crossings of the Tasman, White-fronted Terns were found onboard alive; both birds subsequently died and were kept frozen down. The bird from position "A" is now in the skin collection of D. J. Gibson of Thirroul, N.S.W., and the bird from position "B" is at New Plymouth Museum.

"A," 39°14'S, 156°40'E, 30/6/72, at 2000 hours; Weather: Wind WNW 40 knots, sea rough, overcast with frequent heavy rain squalls, air temp. 12.0°, sea temp. 15.6°.

This bird, an adult, was found on deck and placed in a box overnight; it was found dead in the morning.

"B," 35°50'S, 160°10'E, 14/7/72, at 1600 hours; Weather: wind W 24 knots, sea moderate to rough, 6/8 cloudy, air temp. 17.0°, sea temp. 16.4°.

This bird was a juvenile, still retaining areas of dark grey on the upper wing especially about the elbows. It seemed in good condition so it was banded and released, only to be found dead the following morning.

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## WRYBILLS IN CENTRAL OTAGO: FURTHER RECORDS

Continuing my notes of southern records of Wrybills (Child 1971), I can now add the following:

On 9 September 1971, while making a census count along the Hunter riverbed above Lake Hawea, we found 4 Wrybills in similar circumstances to those seen near the mouth of the Matukituki River in 1969 (Child 1971: 252), all separated and busily feeding at the water's edge. Occasionally a Wrybill would chase off a Banded Dotterel, the latter being relatively common in this area. No evidence of nesting or territorial behaviour was noted among the Wrybills. The Hunter is the closest riverbed in direct line from the Ahuriri where we observed a few in 1965. It would be interesting to know whether, in fact, Wrybills used this riverbed before about 8 miles of the broadest shingle stretches were flooded by the raising of the lake level in 1959 by some 60 feet for hydro-electric storage.

On 30 October 1971, while making a similar census of the shingly stretches of the Matukituki, we counted a total of 7 Wrybills well scattered over a stretch of some nine miles. Probably there were 8 birds since 6 of the 7 we saw were paired, these pairs being one to two miles apart. Two nests, each with two eggs, were found, making this a new record as a breeding species in Central Otago and extending the southern limit of the breeding range.

Another new record is that of D. R. Sutherland and H. Tanfield of 4 Wrybills seen on the mudflats at the head of Lake Wanaka (Sutherland 1972).

On 21 October 1972, during a census along the Makarora riverbed at the head of this lake, I first encountered a lone male Wrybill which flew upriver several hundred yards and was evidently not involved in breeding; then, about another half-mile downriver, in a broad shingle stretch about a mile from the mouth, I found a female incubating two eggs, this being the first nest recorded from this riverbed. Her mate was nowhere in the vicinity. No Wrybills were found on this riverbed during a similar census in 1966.

#### REFERENCES

- CHILD, P. 1971. A Wrybill in Central Otago. *Notornis* 18 (4): 252.  
SUTHERLAND, D. R. 1972. A southern record of Wrybills. *Notornis* 19 (2): 189.

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#### PROBABLE COMMON SANDPIPER AT WAIKANAE

From the main highway bridge to tidal limits the Waikanae River meanders on a wide gravel bed between low banks mostly protected by planted willows. On 24 November 1972, about a quarter mile downstream in a straight line from the bridge, my wife and I briefly observed what was almost certainly a Common Sandpiper.

A small wader flew downstream, about the size of a Banded Dotterel but more delicately built, smaller than a Pectoral and judged to be larger than a Curlew Sandpiper. It had a pale alar bar and its rump was not white. It landed on some half-submerged culverts just for a few minutes, and then flew on and was not seen again. It was extremely active, moving about the water margin, bobbing up and down continually (head and tail), in fast-moving water up to about an inch deep. Its bill was about twice as long as a dotterel's, noted as straight or slightly downcurved. It differed from Pectoral, Sharp-tailed or Curlew Sandpiper in that its back and pectoral flank patches were not spotted but appeared quite uniform in tint, the back darker brown than any of these. The pectoral flank patches were uniform medium brown; the white stripe between them and the wings (mentioned in some field guides) was not noticed. Leg colour not observed but feet seemed large. Head pattern not clearly seen.

The river was searched in vain next day and independently by P. C. Bull, F. C. Kinsky and Ian G. Andrew during the following week. Although I had seen Common Sandpiper in Kent in 1948, a September skin from Western Australia that had been in my possession for many years was even more important in influencing the preliminary identification while still at Waikanae, which was if anything confirmed