

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.

PETER CHILD

10 Royal Terrace,  
Alexandra



#### 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

by the books consulted in Wellington two days later, and by H. R. McKenzie, to whom I am indebted for reminding me that a non-breeding Spotted Sandpiper cannot be distinguished from a Common Sandpiper in the field but who points out that the latter is much more likely for New Zealand than the former from what is known of the distribution of these two species. The habitat would be unusual for most migrant waders, but is apparently not so for a "Common" which according to Witherby *et al.* (1943: 297) is characterised as "frequently occurring on streams where other waders are rarely seen." Serventy & Whittell (1951: 163) note that it often perches on a rock, an un-wader-like habit.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- SERVENTY, D. L.; WHITTELL, H. M. 1951. A handbook of the birds of Western Australia (with the exception of the Kimberley Division). 2nd ed. Pp. 1-384, text-figs 1-46, pls 1-6, 1 map. Perth: Paterson Brokensha Pty Ltd.
- WITHERBY, H. F. *et al.* 1943. The handbook of British birds. Reprinted and revised, 2nd impress. Vol. IV. Cormorants to Crows. Pp. xiv + 1-461, 85 text-figs, 8 maps, pls 93-125. London: H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd.

C. A. FLEMING

"Balivean,"  
42 Wadestown Road,  
Wellington