

A FURTHER NOTE ON THE NOMENCLATURE OF NEW ZEALAND SPUR-WINGED PLOVERS

Brathwaite & Van Tets (1975) have suggested that the name *Vanellus miles* (Boddaert, 1783) should be used for the Spur-winged Plover of New Zealand. During a study of *V. miles* in Southern Victoria, egg dimensions of this population were compared with data in the literature on populations from New Zealand, Tasmania and New South Wales. The results are presented here.

The increase in egg width with latitude in the Australian populations conforms to the trend predicted by Bergmann's rule. Bergmann's rule states that "races of warm blooded vertebrates from cooler climates tend to be larger than races, of the same species from warmer climates" (Mayr 1956). Egg width is a less variable parameter than egg length and can be considered a correlate of body size. In the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), egg length is correlated with habitat and age while egg width remains constant in a population (Gromadski 1966). Although the ranges overlap, the differences between the means of the egg width of the Australian populations are statistically significant (t-test, $p < 0.001$; N.S.W./Vic. $p < 0.1$). However, the difference between the New Zealand sample and the New South Wales sample is not significant.

EGG SIZE VARIATION OF *Vanellus miles* WITH LATITUDE

| Locality and Latitude | (mm) | Range | Mean | S.D. | Source |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Invercargill, N.Z. (46° 24') | Length Width (n=60) | 45.7 - 54.8 33.0 - 37.6 | 49.4 35.3 | ±2.0 ±1.0 | Barlow <i>et al.</i> (1972) |
| Hobart, Tasmania (42° 55') | Length Width (n=171) | 42 - 59 32 - 38 | 51.33 37.44 | ±2.25 ±1.24 | Thomas (1969) |
| Phillip Island, Vic. (38° 30') | Length Width (n=82) | 45.2 - 54.2 32.5 - 37.3 | 48.78 35.78 | ±1.93 ±0.90 | Present study |
| Lake Bathurst, N.S.W. (35° 01') | Length Width (n=16) | | 49.0 35.4 | | Thomas (1969) |

The discontinuity in the expected trend of an increase in egg size with latitude created by the inclusion of the New Zealand birds, is due to the relatively recent establishment of this population from an Australian source. It is thought that the New Zealand population arose from a single pair of Australian birds in 1932 (Barlow 1972). The locality from which the birds came is unknown, but judging by egg size, the New Zealand population appears to show an affinity with a more northern Australian population than is adequately represented by the data available. This evidence indicates that the relatively small

eggs at a high latitude in New Zealand may be due to the parental stock being from N.S.W. or further north, as suggested by Van Tets & Brathwaite (1975), based on plumage characteristics. I wish to thank Drs A. A. Martin and G. F. Van Tets for their valuable criticisms in the preparation of this note.

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FIRST RECORD OF THE CHRISTMAS ISLAND SHEARWATER IN NEW ZEALAND

A specimen of the Christmas Island Shearwater (*Puffinus nativitatis*) was found on the Dargaville West Coast by members of the Northland Branch of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand during a routine beach patrol on 29 February 1976.

The Christmas Island Shearwater is a little known seabird of the Central Pacific Ocean. King (1967 *Seabirds of the Tropical Pacific Ocean*, U.S. Natn. Mus., Washington, D.C.) summarised its present distribution:—

“Breeds on the Hawaiian, Line, Phoenix, Henderson, Ducie, Tuamotu and Austral Islands. Although this species breeds at many localities its total population is not large. It is observed most frequently offshore of its breeding islands. No post breeding migration is known to occur, although it is known to be absent from its subtropical breeding areas during the contra-nuptial season. It may be present all year near its Tropical breeding islands.”

This is apparently the first record for the Australasian Region and its presence on Dargaville Beach is no doubt a case of long distance vagrancy as elaborated by Bourne (1967 *Ibis* 109 (2): 141-167) rather than evidence of migration.

On 22 January 1972 a tropical storm formed in the Northern New Hebrides, the centre passing New Caledonia on 24 January and Norfolk on the 26th, before moving into the South Tasman Sea and losing intensity. During the following day a westerly airstream developed and winds from this quarter continued for several days. The above conditions would be consistent with the finding of a well-dried corpse