

- SKEGG, P. D. G. 1964. Birds of the Hen and Chicken Islands. *Notornis* 11: 159-182.  
STEAD, E. F. 1944. In Summarised Notes. *Notornis* 1: 76.  
ST PAUL, R. 1977. A bushman's seventeen years of noting birds. Part F — notes on other native birds. *Notornis* 24: 65-74.  
TURBOTT, E. G. (Ed.) 1967. *Buller's Birds of New Zealand*. Whitcombe & Tombs.  
WARDS, I. 1975. *New Zealand atlas*. Wellington: Govt. Printer.  
WATT, A. H. 1947. Birds of Parengarenga Harbour and farthest north. *Notornis* 2: 115-120.  
WILKINSON, A. S.; WILKINSON, A. 1952. *Kapiti Bird Sanctuary*. Masterton Printing Co.  
WILSON, R. 1959. *Bird islands of New Zealand*. Whitcombe & Tombs.

N. C. FOX, *Department of Zoology, University of Canterbury, Christchurch*



## SHORT NOTE

### UNUSUAL FLOCK OF FAIRY TERNS

On 11 May 1978, at Taporā on the eastern side of Kaipara Harbour, I was surprised to find a flock of small terns, 13 of which were Fairy Terns (*Sterna nereis*). This is the first such flock to be recorded in New Zealand. With me were Richard Hooper from Warkworth, his wife and his son Peter, and my son Geoffrey. The terns were with other roosting birds on the northern end of a sandspit opposite the houses at the end of Beach Road, a piece of shore known locally as Bird's Beach. High tide was at 1210 hrs and we crossed to the spit by dinghy at 1300 hrs in fine, clear weather.

When first seen, the terns were roosting well spaced out in ones, twos and small groups on the sand. At our approach, they flew before we could see them clearly. Some went fishing while the rest flew down the beach. There were 25 small terns altogether. When we returned later, most of the terns were roosting again. After a quiet stalk, I examined them closely through 7 x 50 binoculars. Thirteen were Fairy Terns, one with a red band on its left leg. This was an adult female which had been banded at Mangawhai Spit on the east coast some 40 km away on 3 December 1977. The birds' bills were yellow right to the tip and the black patch on the crown extended only to about the eye. Also in the flock were eight Little Terns (*Sterna albigrons*); one was in full breeding plumage, two were in the final stages of change into breeding plumage and five, with dark grey, almost black legs and bills, were probably immature. The four other terns seen earlier had not returned.

I am familiar with both these species, having studied the stray Fairy Tern and the Little Terns at Sulphur Point in Tauranga Harbour on many occasions.

From information given by G. J. H. Moon and B. D. Heather, it appears that 13 is the largest flock of Fairy Terns yet seen in New Zealand. Until now, it has not been known where these terns go from their breeding areas in Northland.

R. BRUCE GOFFIN, 133 13th Avenue, Tauranga