

BANDED DOTTEREL INQUIRY.

SECOND INTERIM REPORT.

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Our investigations of the suspected movements of the banded dotterel show that no definite conclusions can be reached without banding. For that reason we are withholding any expression of opinion meantime in the hope that if it is possible to prosecute banding operations in the next few years evidence of a more definite nature as to the bird's movements within New Zealand and possibly, to and from Australia will be forthcoming.

The reports sent in by members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand over the past ten years, apart from two or three relating to the Auckland province, and one to Victoria, throw little light on the problem, especially in the South Island; where there is a regrettable lack of information in respect to the autumn and winter months from such rich feeding areas as Farewell Spit, Golden Bay and Nelson. The most significant reports are those of congregations of 2,000 at Waitakaruru, Firth of Thames on March 26, 1950 (H. R. McKenzie and R. B. Sibson); 500 and 550 at Mangere, Manakau, on April 17 and 24, 1940; and 1000 there on April 23, 1940 (P. C. Bull); 500 at Mangere on May 3, 1940, and again on May 16 (P. C. Bull); 1000 plus at Waitakaruru on June 19, 1949 (R. B. Sibson and Fraser Murray), and 3000 for Ohiwa Harbour in June, 1949 (P. H. Basley). On March 22, 1942, P. C. Bull recorded between 500 and 1000 at a place 40 miles west of Melbourne, in Victoria. Mr. K. A. Hindwood, Sydney, has forwarded records by the late Mr. J. Sutton showing that at Outer Harbour, Adelaide, the average number of banded dotterel observed a month over a period of five years, is low from September until March, but rises to a single pronounced peak in mid-winter (June-July). The appearance of the banded dotterel in the very large numbers indicated above in the Firth of Thames, Manakau, and Ohiwa areas indicates the desirability of a more close watch being kept in other similar areas to ascertain any notable fluctuations of numbers, giving peaks of abundance. Wodzicki (Emu, 46: 25, 30, 1946) published graphs of banded dotterel observed at Waikanae during two years and at Muriwai during 1940. At both localities there were peaks of abundance in late winter and in autumn suggesting passage of migrant birds at those seasons.

At the localities mentioned above dotterels congregate in numbers far beyond the number of local breeding birds but as the banded dotterel (unlike the wrybill and South Island oystercatcher, which breed only in the South Island and are winter visitors to Auckland tidal inlets) breeds throughout both islands, it is impossible to say from which district migrating birds have come. Since few banded dotterel are either shot or found dead, the only practical answer to this problem appears to be colour ringing of breeding birds or young, a distinctive colour to be used for each district. Application has been made to the society's ringing committee for its approval of the scheme on these lines as an official project.

In addition, a breeding census for the whole or the greater part of New Zealand should not be impossible now that the membership of the Society covers almost every district. It will not be possible to make an absolutely accurate census but it is hoped that we can determine whether a particular district supports tens, hundreds or thousands of breeding birds. Such information for the whole country should help assessing the status of flocks in the non-breeding season.

FOOD OF FLEDGLING SILVEREYES.—Three young silvereyes, placed in an aviary just after leaving the nest in November, 1949, were fed through the wires by the parents. The chief item of food given was a brown moth (*Noctua*) which was swallowed whole. Many were pushed through the wires but were dropped to the ground by the chicks if they were satisfied.—E. O. Welch, Masterton.