

going, though they were often conspicuous over the choppy waters outside the bay.

A most profitable walk was taken over the sandy flats. Four species of waders were present in some numbers. Whatever may have happened or have been reported in the past, the observations of recent years show that many Godwits, Stilts and Banded Dotterels now pass the winter in the south of New Zealand. Pied Oystercatchers were strung out along the tideline. But to some visitors the most satisfying experience on the flats was to be found in watching resting flocks of Black-fronted Terns, which numbered more than a hundred and of which most appeared to be in full breeding plumage. Even a Reef Heron was seen, lone representative of a species now much outnumbered in Otago by the White-faced Heron. The Caspian Tern, so plentiful in the north, is here hailed as a rarity.

On the following day the first objective was Taiaroa Head, where the large white downy youngster of one of the three pairs of Royal Albatrosses which are breeding this year could be viewed through the tall Stalag-like barbed wire fence. It was here that some of our members temporarily forsook ornithology to scramble down the cliffs and examine at close quarters a colony of fur seals. Two gannets flew past.

Thence the itinerary took us across the peninsula to the outer inlets with their Stilts, Oystercatchers and a White-faced Heron; and so to Sandfly Bay. Here at least for the visitors from the north was the *pièce de résistance* of the trip, a trio of Yellow-eyed Penguins, two in bright freshly moulted plumage on their breeding slope and one swimming in the gentle surf. Offshore on a reef were Black Oystercatchers and beyond on the towering Gull Rocks most of the available space was occupied by the so-called Stewart Island Shags. The Society is grateful to Mr Sharp, the official ranger, for the part which he played in making this a most successful day.

Individual visitors were taken by their hosts to other points of ornithological interest: Tomahawk Lagoon with its impressive flock of Shovelers; Waikouaiti with its many White-faced Herons and waders; the Town Belt with its Robins, Bellbirds and Creepers. To Mrs Walker and her helpers who provided such unstinting hospitality, the visitors are deeply grateful.

R.B.S.

OBITUARY

REV. F. H. ROBERTSON

Frederic Herbert Robertson was born in Feilding in 1910. He was educated in Auckland, where he was dux of the Mount Albert Grammar School, and later took his Master of Arts degree with honours. He then joined the Presbyterian Theological College in Dunedin, where he was a notable scholar. At the end of his studies he entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church at Ross on the West Coast. From there he was appointed Director for New Zealand of the Christian Order Campaign undertaken by all the Protestant Churches of New Zealand. On the termination of this task he responded to a call from St Columba's Church, Havelock North, where he remained until his appointment as first Rector of Lindisfarne College in Hastings, a position he held until his untimely death on 15 December 1954.

Fred Robertson was a man of many parts, serving the community untiringly. Though this is not the place to enumerate his achievements as a member of his Church and in social work, his initiative and work in the establishment of social services and homes for old people in Hawke's Bay and in Poverty Bay must be mentioned, and above all the founding and organization of Lindisfarne College. It was through his vision, powers of organization, and patient labours that these institutions were set up. They will remain a living monument to him.

It was in 1946 that Fred Robertson became a member of the New Zealand

Ornithological Society. He subsequently took a great interest in its activities. For several years he served as the Society's organizer for Hawke's Bay. He was also one of the organizers and foundation members of the Ornithological Section, Hawke's Bay Branch, of the Royal Society of New Zealand. His chief ornithological interests were in the Cape Kidnappers gannetry and in the ornithology of Hawke's Bay. At Kidnappers he was engaged in a long-term study of behaviour, life history and population trends in the gannet. This study was not completed at the time of his death, but had already provided the first evidence of the dispersal of young gannets to Australia, of the age when young gannets return for breeding, and many other data. Fred Robertson took part in the 1947 and 1949 D.S.I.R. expeditions to White Island, which provided valuable data for the 1946-47 gannet census of New Zealand and for the knowledge of the fauna of that island. He also devoted much attention to the early ornithological exploration of Hawke's Bay by McLean and Guthrie-Smith using unpublished material. This study was combined with field work at the haunts of these early ornithologists. Unfortunately he had not reached the stage where his leisure was sufficient to commit more of his bird studies to publication.

To Fred Robertson's many friends throughout New Zealand the news of his untimely death came as a great shock. They will long remember his very friendly personality and innate sense of humour which endeared him to all who had the privilege of working with him in the field. He is survived by his wife Veronica and two sons, Christopher and Timothy, to whom we extend our deep sympathy.

K.W.

WADERS ON AHURIRI LAGOON, NAPIER

By D. H. BRATHWAITE

In the course of some five years' more or less regular, if not exactly systematic observation on Ahuriri Lagoon, many interesting species have been seen, especially among the waders. During 1953 and 1954, several such records were made, but for various reasons they have not been published. It is my intention to combine these records into one paper, and at the same time to list all the other species in this group which have ever been recorded here, with brief notes. The noteworthy records to be given hereunder are as follows:

Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*) — first New Zealand occurrence.
Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus* subsp.) — second occurrence in Hawke's Bay.
Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis ruficollis*) — first occurrence in Hawke's Bay.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla* subsp.) — second occurrence in New Zealand.

Japanese Snipe (*Gallinago hardwicki*) — fourth (?) occurrence in New Zealand.

The Ahuriri Lagoon Reserve was originally a large expanse of water, with wide areas of tidal mud-flats and shell-banks. Although Hamilton (1886) mentioned certain species of waders as occurring on this lagoon, no systematic observations were ever carried out, and we shall never know in full the changes in bird life which have resulted in the transition of this body of water into farmland. In comparison with the old lagoon, there is only a limited area of tidal flats, salt-marshes and drains today; these are scattered, and it was a long time before I was able to locate the favourite haunts of the different species. For the lone observer there are still difficulties which even motor transport cannot altogether overcome. If time should be limited, it is not wise to infer from the numbers or absence of a particular species in one area the numbers present on the whole lagoon. To move from one spot to another in a search for, say, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, can entail a walk of half an hour or a trip of several miles by car with a walk at the end of it.