Kea: Not common in the main valley area, only two being seen at an altitude of 5300ft. One bird was observed prising up quite heavy stones with its beak, and seeking insects, etc., underneath. Their numbers appear to fluctuate with the seasons and they are usually more common at high altitudes in the side valleys. Mr. Cameron has found a Kea's nest with young, above bushline (c. 3800ft.) and well concealed several feet in under a rock, beyond arm's length.

Rock Wren: Fairly numerous in some areas, at high altitudes well above beech line.

Skylark: Common on valley floor at low altitudes. A nest with three eggs was found in the middle of a cart track on 19/1/52.

N.Z. Pipit: Common on grassy and shingly areas at all altitudes up to 6000ft. Generally the most frequently noticed bird of the region above the sub-alpine scrub. Often seen well above the snowline. Caterpillars of the Black Mountain Butterfly form part of its diet in this region.

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RARE FIORDLAND BIRDS

By JOHN HALL-JONES

This may seem a rather belated account of two expeditions which took place some years ago, but the author asks forgiveness and pleads absence overseas for the past three years.

In 1955 I was fortunate enough to accompany a Canterbury Museum party into unexplored Fiordland country west of Te Anau's southern arm. We were fated with the typically heavy rainfall of this region but some interesting ornithological finds were made.

The McKenzie Burn points the way to the west and under the shadow of its surrounding cliffs we found the solitary metatarsus of a bush moa *(Megalapteryx didinus).* Identification of the bone was later confirmed by Mr. R. J. Scarlett of the Canterbury Museum.

Descending into Lake Te Au, we were greeted by Crested Grebes, Blue Duck, and the now rare Brown Duck. The latter was of particular interest as she was fostering three ducklings.

Two Bush Wrens were seen, and in the vicinity of Coronation Peak, Rock Wrens were relatively common. In the shadow of this peak, amongst typically clipped snowgrass, we discovered some droppings of the *Notornis.* It is interesting to note that this area lies some 25 miles west of Lake Orbell; a considerably further distance when one takes into account the nature of the intervening terrain.

A small party now set off towards Nancy Sound. In a boggy area some three miles outward bound, Hitchings discovered the recent remains of a Kakapo. In the same locality, Bruce found a recently dead Roa *(Apteryx haasti)* with egg.

Homeward bound we noted further Notornis droppings as we crossed Robin Saddle, some five miles east of our previous sighting.

Stimulated by our finds of the previous year, Carey, Couzens*, Reid and I decided to visit the Saddle Hill area of George Sound, where Wisely had sighted two Kakapo in 1949.

February, 1956, found us heading westwards from Te Anau's

* Killed on 19/11/59 near Cape Selbourne, in Antarctica, when a snocat which he was driving plunged into a hidden crevasse. He was serving as a Lieutenant in the R.N.Z.A.C.

middle arm through familiar Fiordland rain and the ever persistent sandfly. The Green Kaka would not appear to be as plentiful as in days gone by and indeed only one bird was noted on this trip. Four days' bush slashing from George Sound brought us to our base camp at the foot of Saddle Hill.

That evening whilst huddled around our campfire, a shadow flew low overhead emitting a most unusual weird cry which might almost be described as maniacal. We had never heard any resemblance to this call before and I have no particular desire to hear it repeated. It could well have been the cry of the Laughing Owl *(Sceloglaux albifacies)*.

Poking amongst the boulders at the foot of our hill, Carey discovered some small bones which were later confirmed by Mr. R. J. Scarlett as those of the Kakapo.

The next day Carey and I ascended the leading ridge of Saddle Hill. Nearing the summit the character of our ill-defined track suddenly changed to that of a well kept garden path. The edges had been neatly trimmed and all untidy waste had been removed. Five dust bowls, some two feet wide and six inches deep lined this fifty yards stretch of track. Well defined tunnels led off down through stunted species of *Dacrydium* and *Dracophyllum* to a tiny tarn some 300 feet below.

Descending rapidly to this ledge, we found that our tarn was surrounded by a mass of rolled grass pellets. Further searching revealed a typical spiral dropping of fine grass texture which now resides in the Southland Museum. A night vigil was kept but no Kakapo were seen or heard.

Before leaving our Kakapo haunt we were visited by two wrens which I can only describe as being of a much more vivid green colour than the normal Bush Wren. In a subsequent communication, Dr. Falla suggested that they could have been the recently described Fiordland Wren *(Xenicus gilviventris rineyi)*.

Poole, A. L., 1951 — Preliminary reports of the New Zealand-American Fiordland expedition. N.Z. D.S.I.R. Bulletin 103. Govt. Printer, Wellington.
Williams, G. R., 1956 — The Kakapo (**Strigops habroptilus**, Gray). Notornis 7 (2) : 29-56.
Falla, R. A., 1956 — Personal communication.

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NOTES ON SOME ARCTIC WADERS IN THE MANAWATU

By IAN G. ANDREW

The estuaries of the Rangitikei and Manawatu have extensive areas of tidal flats which are favoured by several species of waders and it is reasonable to expect that many more interesting records will be made in these localities in the near future. The Manawatu is already well known for the regular winter appearance there of a flock of Royal Spoonbills (P. regia). Five species of waders which breed in New Zealand occur regularly at both estuaries. These are: South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Northern Oystercatcher, Banded Dotterel, Wrybill and Pied Stilt.

The only arctic-breeding wader which occurs regularly in fair numbers in the Manawatu is the Bar-tailed Godwit *(L. lapponica baueri)*. In 1958-1959 the summer populations of these at the estuaries of the Manawatu and Rangitikei respectively were c. 260 and c. 40. The winter population at the Manawatu is usually between 10 and 20. Other arctic waders are relatively rare visitors to the district. A summary of species