

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following members took part in beach patrols during 1960 and credit is due to them for collecting the information summarised above: I. G. Andrew, B. W. Boeson, P. C. Bull, J. R. Chaproniere, D. G. Fenwick, N. M. Gleeson, P. C. Harper, M. Hodgkins, M. J. Hogg, M. J. Imber, J. R. Jackson, S. R. Kennington, N. J. Ledgard, Mrs. M. McGrath, D. McGrath, Mrs. R. V. McLintock, R. J. Nilsson, W. T. Poppelwell, R. B. Sibson, P. D. G. Skegg, D. A. Urquhart, M. Williams, C. H. Witters and A. Wright.

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NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF THE UPPER HOLLYFORD VALLEY, FIORDLAND

By J. W. WINTER

A party of about thirty-five science students of the University of Otago spent seven days, from May 14th to 21st, 1960, at Murray Gunn's Camp in the Hollyford Valley. The following are mainly the results of my personal observations during the trip, but also include relevant information obtained by other members of the party.

The valley in the region of the camp is up to a mile wide on its floor, and averages about 500 ft. above sea level. The vegetation of a mixed Beech and Podocarp type, in which Silver Beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) is dominant, densely covers the valley and extends up to about 3,000 ft. The only clearings consist of extensive shingle banks and small tussock flats along the river.

Methods and Results

Five bird counts were made in the following way. All birds either seen or heard were recorded over a period of one hour, while walking at a moderate pace. The distance covered varied according to the terrain but would be in the region of one and a-half to three miles. In the case of birds not seen, only one individual was recorded, except for White-eyes which were recorded two to four at a time according to the amount of noise. In some cases this was obviously inadequate, as flocks of up to dozen birds were seen.

The main drawback of the method is that while Song Thrushes and Bellbirds can be heard from a considerable distance Riflemen and Tits can only be heard when fairly close. Thus a distorted picture of relative abundance is inevitable. However, the method is useful for obtaining a general picture of the bird population and for comparing it between different areas.

The results are shown in the table:

<i>Count</i>	I	II	III	IV	V
White-eye	15	41	16	8	5
Paradise Duck	15	—	—	—	—
Bellbird	12	16	5	2	2
Yellow-breasted Tit	8	18	6	10	5
Song Thrush	5	8	—	—	—
Rifleman	3	7	7	1	3
Fantail	3	2	—	—	—
Grey Warbler	1	2	4	1	—
N.Z. Pigeon	—	—	1	2	—
Chaffinch	4	7	1	1	2
Blackbird	—	2	—	—	—
Dunnock	—	4	—	—	—
Kea	—	—	—	2	—
Unidentified	6	3	2	—	1

Count I — was taken along the road northwards from the camp. Light steady rain was falling, but the birds still seemed to be fairly active. Song Thrushes were in full song, Bellbirds noisy and the White-eyes very active. The river was plainly visible for part of the time and the Paradise Ducks recorded. Time 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Count II — was taken along the road southwards from the camp, between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. It had been a brilliant sunny day, but the valley by this time was in deep shadow. Far more birds were heard and seen in this count than in any of the others. Probably because it was the only evening count taken. Possibly, also due to the fine day after a spell of bad weather.

Count III — was taken from the road on the saddle between the Hollyford and Eglinton; along the Howden track to the Key Summit turn-off, which is a little below bush line. The bush was very quiet with only an occasional Bellbird calling. The small birds were more often heard than seen. The day was bright and sunny with no wind. Time 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

Count IV — was taken from the Marion swing bridge along the L. Marion track. The bush was quiet. The Kea heard was well up amongst the crags. The day was dull and overcast. Time 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.

Count V — was a continuation of IV and ended at the bush line overlooking Lake Marion. The unidentified record was probably a Redpoll, as on the way back we came across a flock of them in much the same place. Time 10.30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Notes on the Species

BLACK SHAG — One pair seen flying down stream over the river. Another single bird was reported.

PARADISE DUCK — Were very common along the river, either in pairs of a male and female, or small groups of three or four. One flock of fourteen and one of nine were seen. A solitary bird was reported on Lake Marion.

BLUE DUCK — One was floating on a patch of smooth water in the main river. When we approached it merely ambled up onto some shingle by the water's edge. Also reported from Moraine Creek.

HARRIER — Three separate sightings of a solitary bird, so they could have been the same one. Only seen on the valley floor and usually over the river flats, once being disturbed as it glided down to a deer carcass. I was rather surprised to see it here, as the open ground consists of shingle banks and small grassy flats which are neither large nor numerous.

NEW ZEALAND PIGEON — Only recorded in two of the counts, but were seen scattered throughout the bush. Never more than two together and usually seen when flying above the bush. Often performing swooping glides.

SOUTH ISLAND KAKA — Was frequently heard or seen in the higher half of the bush, singly or in twos.

KEA — Recorded in one count from bluffs well above the bush. From various reports they are fairly well distributed but not in any great numbers.

MOREPORK — Heard only once at night.

KINGFISHER — Was seen once near the Marion swing bridge.

RIFLEMAN — Found in small numbers throughout the bush, usually in parties of two or three.

FANTAIL — Appeared to be confined to the lower bush and valley floor, and always where the bush was thin or on the edge of clearings. One evening two groups, six in one (all pied) and three in the other (one black) were looking for insects over a still flat stretch of water of a small creek.

YELLOW-BREASTED TIT — Was seen throughout the bush and more males than females. Always solitary except occasionally a male and a female would be together. I would say this is the abundant bird, after the White-eye. On three days when we were studying a mapped area of three chains square, a female tit was a constant visitor. We presumed it to be the same bird. Only once did we see a male during those three days.

BROWN CREEPER — One small flock of six passed through the bush, very close to me, continually calling and searching for food on the bark of branches and saplings.

GREY WARBLER — Sparsely distributed throughout the bush, and more often heard than seen. Never more than one heard or seen at a time.

SONG THRUSHES — Were heard in full song from the bush on the valley floor but not any higher up the valley sides. Only one or two were seen as they were very shy.

BLACKBIRD — Again only seen and heard on the valley floor. The only indication of them was their subdued alarm note from the undergrowth beside the road except for one seen flying low across the road, and a group of six which burst from under a litter of dead branches at my feet. The latter were near Eel Creek between High and Hidden Falls.

DUNNOCK — Was seen only a few times on the roadside near the camp.

PIBIT — A flock of eight to ten birds was seen on Gertrude Saddle which is well above the bush line.

BELLBIRD — Found throughout the bush, but judging from the counts they are more numerous on the valley floor. Usually in ones or twos, but two small flocks of seven birds and of about a dozen were reported seen on the flax plants near Key Summit.

TUI — A probable sighting of one flying high over the bush at Gunn's Camp. Two reported at Hidden Falls feeding on Miro berries.

LESSER REDPOLL — One small flock was seen in the bush near Lake Marion.

CHAFFINCH — Widely distributed in the bush but only in small numbers. The most seen together was four, and usually only one or two.

HOUSE SPARROW — A few were constantly seen around the camp, but nowhere else.

BUSH HAWK — A fleeting glimpse caught as one flew low along the road, and struck a branch where a House Sparrow had just landed. There was a distinct clap, and a feather drifted down, but the fate of the sparrow was not ascertained.

WHITE-EYE — This is probably the most abundant bird in the bush occurring in small flocks of between three and a dozen birds. They were more often heard than seen and usually occupied the canopy layer of the bush, though coming down low along its edges. Their distribution appears to be throughout the bush.

No Kiwis or Wekas were seen and, according to Murray Gunn, they were thought to have been wiped out by stoats in the nineteen thirties. One stoat was caught in a live trap in the bush well away from any buildings. Mr. P. K. Dorizac, Chief Ranger Fiordland N.P., tells me that Kiwis are still plentiful in the Cleddau Valley, which is through the Homer Tunnel from the Hollyford.



BIRDS OBSERVED ON THE WAY UP TO, AND AT, BOULDER LAKE, HAUPIRI RANGE, NELSON PROVINCE

By C. McCANN

On 18th March, 1961, a party consisting of Messrs. Frank Soper of Puramahoe, S. Northcote-Bade, A. Sears, B. Durant and the author visited the Boulder Lake area. We returned over the same route on the 20th.

We camped at the site of the newly constructed hut of the Golden Bay Alpine Club. Mr. Soper was largely responsible for the construction of this hut, which is situated beside a small waterfall, on