

MANUKAU NORTH · OTAHUHU, MANGERE, PUKETUTU,  
IHUMATAO

This report covers the localities formerly separated as Manukau (a) and Manukau (b). With the completion of the major portion of the Manukau sewage purification works, shore-birds have lost more than two square miles of tidal feeding grounds and at least three high-tide roosts (v. Notornis VIII, 221 for map). Inevitably the status of several species has been affected. Gains and losses are being carefully studied. The most obvious gains have been with Red-billed Gulls, Black Swans and ducks; and temporarily the changed conditions have enabled Pied Stilts to breed. On the other hand Banded Dotterels, Wrybills and Golden Plover seem to be deserting the area.

The period of transition when shallow lagoons, formed behind the new sea-walls, proved very attractive to arctic waders, especially the smaller species, is over, except perhaps along one edge of L. Oruarangi. It was thought that the new embankments between the oxidation ponds might be used by waders as roosts. To some extent this has happened; and at high tide it is not unusual for flocks of South Island Pied Oystercatchers to gather on them, though Godwits and Knots generally are flying to more distant resting places. During the winter mixed flocks of waders were quick to use the partly constructed runway of Mangere airport, where it extends about half a mile over the tidal flats south of Ihumatao Point.

WHITE-FACED HERON — Numerous after midsummer on L. Oruarangi and at Ihumatao.

BLACK SWAN — 1000+ on 8/4/61 off Mangere airport. Usually up to 100 throughout winter on Explosion Crater and some on L. Oruarangi; but other Puketutu pools avoided.

GRAY TEAL — 2 on L. Oruarangi on 13/3/61.

SHOVELER — Noted only on L. Oruarangi, where some were present December-February.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER — 20+ on L. Oruarangi on 28/12/60, 2000+ off Ihumatao on 11/2/61. From time to time the new embankments were used as high-tide roosts by these oystercatchers; so too was the partly built runway at Mangere airport.

VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER — 2, black, at Ihumatao, 8/4/61.

BANDED DOTTEREL — 1 at L. Oruarangi on 8/12/60. None seen at Ihumatao Pt. when other waders were numerous on 11/2/61 and 8/4/61.

RED-BREASTED DOTTEREL — 1 on the old causeway, 31/12/60.

WRYBILL — At L. Oruarangi, 1 on 4/12/60; 2 on 26 & 28/12/60; c. 90 on 11/2/61 and 16/2/61. At Harania Ck., near Favona causeway, 1 on 9/2/61; 15 on 7/4/61. No big winter flock was noted near Puketutu. The displaced birds probably wintered on the Karaka coast, where numbers were much bigger than ever counted before, though some may have regularly used the new runway at Mangere airport. Here 70 were found on 30/7/61.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** — Summer numbers in upper Manukau well up to average, e.g. c. 3000 at Harania Ck. on 11/11/60 and 25/11/60. 4000+ at L. Oruarangi on 4/12/60; c. 8000 on 11/2/61 off Ihumatao and 600+ on 8/4/61. Some hundreds in winter off Ihumatao and Mangere airport.

**ASIATIC BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** — 1 at Harania Ck. on 11/11/60, identified as of this form by its white underwing.

**TURNSTONE** — 2 on 26/12/60 on the top of a new embankment, c. 40 on 11/2/61 at Ihumatao.

**KNOT** — Plentiful in upper Manukau in summer. Hundreds at Harania Ck. on 29/10/60 and 1000+ on 24/11/60. 500+ on L. Oruarangi on 4/12/60. Off Ihumatao 8000+ on 11/2/61. None noted off Ihumatao on 8/4/61.

**SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** — 2 beside L. Oruarangi on 11/2/61; 6 on 16/2/61.

**PIED STILT** — At a summer census 4/12/60, 1800+ were counted in northern Manukau, viz. 1210 at Harania Ck., 135 at Pikes Pt., 200+ along the old Puketutu causeway and 250+ at L. Oruarangi, where perhaps 50 pairs were breeding rather late.

The swampy edge at Spoonbill Pool where Stilts bred successfully in spring 1959, was deeply submerged; and the only area where they are known to have bred in spring 1960 was the rough shoreline of L. Oruarangi. Only towards the end of October did it appear that some of the scores of Stilts present were in pairs and contemplating nesting; and the first bird sitting on eggs was found on Nov. 10. Then things happened rapidly. On Nov. 17 there were at least six occupied nests and on Dec. 1, twelve in one corner only. On Dec. 8 a survey of most of L. Oruarangi revealed at least 35 and possibly 50 nesting pairs. Most eggs were laid in November or early December. Several nests still contained eggs in the last few days of December, but there were also many young at various stages but not yet flying. On 11/2/61 among c. 500 stilts on this pool were scores of young only recently on the wing.

At the same time Pied Stilts were the most conspicuous birds after Red-billed Gulls along the causeway. It is possible that a few pairs bred early near here on a small secluded swamp behind Bull Bay. On Nov. 17 among many stilts feeding along the edges of the circulation channel between the two parallel embankments there were some just-flying young. More continued to arrive; and since opportunities for studying young stilts here were unusually handy, it was noticed that many showed some black feathering in the tail feathers, this forming in some a distinct band across the tip of the tail. On 31/12/60 these were carefully checked by Peter Skegg and his brother, who found that out of 133 juveniles examined as they rose in flight, only 7 did not show some black near the tips of the tail feathers.

A very dusky stilt frequented the old causeway during December.

Pied Stilts were quick to use the shallow pools formed within

the stop-banks in the early stages of the construction of the runway at Mangere airport, e.g. 40 on 11/2/61; hundreds on 8/4/61.

2000+ at Harania Ck. on 3/6/61 c. 1500 on 6/7/61 — not exceptional for upper Manukau at this season.

**BLACK-BACKED GULL** — At least 3 pairs nested on the embankments beside L. Oruarangi.

**RED-BILLED GULL** — Large numbers of non-breeders summered in Upper Manukau, e.g. c. 2000 at Otahuhu on 25/11/60. Hundreds all summer along old causeway feeding over ponds, e.g. 1000+ on 26/12/60. Increasing in autumn; e.g. 6000 resting on Ascot Pool on 13/3/61.

**WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN** — 1 in fading breeding dress several times seen at Harania Ck. between 29/10/60 and 24/11/60: 1 (probably same bird) in eclipse, frequently noted at old causeway, over Teal Pool and L. Oruarangi, in December. 1 in full breeding dress at Harania Ck. seen several times between 9/2/61 and 3/6/61.

**CASPIAN TERN** — 29 on 4/12/60, summer census, in Manukau north. Influx starts soon after, viz. 40+ at L. Oruarangi on 8/12/60; 130+ on 26/12/60; 150+ on 11/2/61.

**WHITE-FRONTED TERN** — 2 off end of Mangere airport on 11/2/61.

— R.B.S.

#### MANUKAU SOUTH. KARAKA-PUHINUI

**GANNET** — 170+ on 17/6/61 feeding near shore at Weymouth. c. 200 on 13/8/61 fishing off Seagrove.

**LITTLE BLACK SHAG** — c. 150 on 17/6/61 at Weymouth, where flocks occur every winter.

**GREAT WHITE HERON** — 1 reported several times near Weymouth between 24/4/61 and 26/8/61. 1 at Kingseat on 20/7/61.

**WHITE-FACED HERON** — Now a typical bird of the coast, creeks and ponds. 33 on summer census, 4/12/60. No noteworthy winter flocks.

**PARADISE DUCK** — 14 in Higham's marsh on 14/5/61, 2 being adult females. Subsequently present in varying numbers, till 11/7/61, when three dark-headed birds were still present.

**S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER** — 200+ on 20/11/60 at Kidd's were evidently summering. Summer census c. 475 at Puhinui on 4/12/60. Winter census, 1,740 on 30/7/61; 1,900 on 1/8/61 in Kidd's bay; 1000+ on 13/8/61.

**VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER** — 1 black on 4/12/60; 3 black on 30/7/61.

**ASIATIC GOLDEN PLOVER** — c. 40 on 20/11/60; 46 on 1/1/61; 68 on 8/1/61; 60+ on 19/2/61; 70+ on 18/3/61; 1 in Higham's marsh on 30/7/61 — instances of wintering in N.Z. are very few; 1 on 5/8/61; 2 on 27/8/61; 3 on 10/9/61; 7 on 14/9/61; 22 (only 2 not showing some black on underparts) on 8/10/61.

**BANDED DOTTEREL** — c. 10 on 20/11/60 in Kidd's marsh; 1 large chick banded; c. 75 in Kidd's; 1 pair and 1 juv. in Higham's marsh; and two nests of 3 eggs each on the shellbanks on 1/1/61. At least

one of these late nests hatched. 300+ on 5/4/61, none in good colour; c. 275 on 28/5/61.

**RED-BREASTED DOTTEREL** — Usually at least a pair in Kidd's bay; 1 nest with 2 eggs on big shell-bank on 1/1/61; 4 on 14/5/61; 2 prs., one on territory, one not, on 13/8/61. An early nest with 2 eggs on big shell-bank on 14/9/61.

**WRYBILL** — Only 2 on 20/11/60; none on summer census, 4/12/60; 94 on 1/1/61; 260 on 8/1/61; 800 on 19/2/61; c. 1200 on 18/3/61; c. 1350 on 5/4/61; c. 2700 on winter census, on 30/7/61 (probably includes the former flock of Puketutu now displaced); 1870 on 1/8/61; c. 1100 on 13/8/61; c. 700 on 27/8/61.

**ASIATIC WHIMBREL** — 1 at big shellbank, chased by two godwits, on 13/8/61. Also 16/8/61 and 8/10/61.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** — c. 8000 on 20/11/60. 6000+ at Puhinui and c. 4900 along Karaka coast on 4/12/60, when summer census of whole of Manukau was taken at c. 15,500. Winter census, 3300 on 30/7/61. c. 1600 on 27/8/61.

**GREENSHANK** — 1 on shore among stilts near Higham's sluice on 13/8/61 and 16/8/61.

**TURNSTONE** — c. 190 on 22/11/60; c. 200 at Urquhart's Point on 4/12/60; c. 255 in Kidd's bay on 1/1/61 and 19/2/61; c. 250 in Higham's marsh on 19/3/61; 89 on winter census 30/7/61; 31 on 27/8/61.

**KNOT** — 1 only with c. 7500 Godwit on 2/11/60; c. 60 on 4/12/60; c. 800 on 18/3/61; c. 300 on 30/7/61.

**RED-NECKED STINT** — Kidd's Bay seems to have become a favourite haunt, where numbers build up over the summer. 3 on 20/11/60; 7 on 22/11/60; 10 on 4/12/60; 14 on 1/1/61 and 8/1/61 and for some time afterwards; 11+ on 19/2/61 and 18/3/61; 10 on 5/4/61 (6 well reddened); 2 on 14/5/61; 4 (all pale) on 18/5/61; odd ones throughout winter among Wrybills; 2 on 13/8/61 and 27/8/61; 6 on 23/10/61.

**PIED STILT** — 107 counted along Karaka coast on 4/12/60; by which date family parties have started to leave their inland breeding grounds. 1100 on winter census 30/7/61. c. 700 in Kidd's bay on 1/8/61. 1 pr. at nest at Oakland's Rd. on 13/8/61 and others present. An almost black stilt was seen at Kidd's on 13 & 16/8/61.

**CASPIAN TERN** — 25 non-breeders on shellbank on 22/11/60; 46 along Karaka coast on 4/12/60; 46 on 30/7/61; c. 100 on 27/8/61.

**WHITE-FRONTED TERN** — 6 on the old jetty on 20/11/61; c. 220 on 4/12/60 along coast; 31 prs. with nests on big shellbank on 1/1/61; also with them c. 150 resting terns, including 9 mottled juv. visitors from some colony probably on the outer west coast; c. 50 nests, only two with eggs, on 8/1/61. The colony failed. None recorded on this coast on 30/7/61.

**TERN (Sp.?)** — 2 tiny terns of the type frequently noted in recent years were seen at Seagrove on 4/12/60.

— H.R.McK., R.B.S.