



OSNZ news

No. 25 December, 1982

NOTE: Deadline for the March issue will be 14th February.

Colour banded Black-fronted Terns

Yes, it is something completely different, now we have not only colour banded Black Swans, Red-billed Gulls, Mallards and White-fronted Terns but also colour banded Black-fronted Terns.

There are two aims for this project (1) to examine in detail the various plumage changes with age, and (2) to obtain information about the winter movements of birds. Where do the birds which appear in the North Island come from? Do Marlborough birds migrate across Cook Strait for the winter or do the birds come from further afield? How much movement of birds is there along the South Island coast during the winter? Are birds wintering in one area or are they moving up and down the coast, roosting at any suitable location?

To try and answer some of these questions South Island members plan to colour band chicks during the next 2-3 breeding seasons. A start has been made already and by 1/12 72 chicks had been banded on the Ahuriri River by Colin O'Donnell and Fred Overmars and Jack Cowie had banded 3 on the Conway River and 1 on the Waiau.

(a) Colour combination — there are no more than two colours on each bird. It is essential to record the order of the colours *and* which leg they are on e.g. left leg red over blue.

(b) A feather-by-feather description of the bird's plumage and colours of the soft parts; if possible with sketches and photos.

(c) Number of young birds in the flock and size of the whole flock.

(d) If there are other young birds in the flock are they in the same plumage as the banded bird? If not, what variants are they, and how many are like this?

Additional important information can be obtained by making repeat observations over as long a time period as possible, in case the banded bird seems to use the same area.

Observations should be sent to the survey conveners — either Barrie Heather, 10 Jocelyn Cres., Silverstream, or Paul Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4.

Look out for a progress report in the March issue.

PAUL SAGAR & BARRIE HEATHER

Falla Memorial Award

Nominations for the above award should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, OSNZ, c/- Post Office, Pauatahanui, Wellington, by 30 April 1983. Nominations must be signed by at least two financial members of OSNZ and should state clearly the claims of the nominee on a national scale, together with a brief ornithological vitae.

The basic requirements of the award are detailed in *OSNZ news* 19.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following four Council members retire in May 1983 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr R. B. Sibson (President)

Dr P. C. Bull

Mr D. E. Crockett

Mr P. M. Sagar

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1983, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1983 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1983 in writing and signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1983 Annual General Meeting will be held in Christchurch on Saturday, 21 May.

R. S. SLACK,
Hon. Secretary, OSNZ

c/o Post Office,
Pauatahanui,
Wellington

Specimens of N.Z. birds in U.K. museum

Fisher, C. T. 1981. Specimens of extinct, endangered or rare birds in the Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool. Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club 101: 276-285. This publication gives an inventory of specimens held in these categories and includes the following specimens from N.Z. *Phalacrocorax c. carunculatus* (1); *Procellaria parkinsoni* (1); *Nesonetta aucklandica* (5); *Coturnix novaezealandiae* (5); *Cabalus modestus* (2); *Thinornis novaeseelandiae* (5); *Coenocorypha aucklandica pusilla* (6); *Coenocorypha a. huegeli* (1 - type); *Coenocorypha a. aucklandica* (1); *Himantopus h. novaezealandiae* (2); *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae chathamensis* (2); *Strigops habroptilus* (14); *Cyanoramphus auriceps forbesi* (1); *Cyanoramphus malherbi* (3); *Sceloglaux albifacies* (3); *Xenicus l. longipes* (3); *Xenicus l. stokesii* (1); *Xenicus lyalli* (1); *Petroica traversi* (2); *Turnagra capensis turnagra* (1); *Turnagra c. capensis* (12); *Notiomystis cincta cincta* (4); *Anthornis melanura melanoccephala* (4); *Callaeas cinerea wilsoni* (3); *Callaeas c. cinerea* (10 - including type); *Creadion c. carunculatus* (1); *Heteralocha acutirostris* (1). Total 95 specimens.

The record of *Xenicus l. stokesii* is particularly interesting as this specimen from Taupo was not known before (see Oliver 1955 and the Field Guide).

HUGH ROBERTSON

Brown Creeper survey

At the Regional Representatives Meeting held at the AGM in May it was agreed to carry out a survey of Brown Creepers at the same time as the study of Yellowheads in the South Island.

The *Provisional Atlas of Bird Distribution* shows that Brown Creepers are well distributed around the South Island. The purpose of the current survey is to determine the distribution of the species in finer detail and to examine the range of habitats exploited.

A simple survey card has been produced to record distribution and habitat information and provision is made under 'Comments' for those with greater expertise to add relevant information that will add to the usefulness of the survey. Such information may refer to old records, breeding, range extension, habitats etc. A supply of these cards is available from the survey organiser: Stewart Lauder, 9 Winnie Street, Grey-mouth.

STEWART LAUDER

Band and Tag

The Christmas holidays are approaching fast and we would like to remind operators that during this period it may be difficult to obtain supplies from the Banding Office. Therefore please make sure that you order your supplies before 23 December.

We ask that all operators, who did not renew their permits which expired in August, return all their bands, schedules etc. as soon as possible to the Banding Office. Failure to do so may jeopardise your chances of obtaining a permit in the future.

Work on the Bird Atlas has progressed well and most of the corrections have been processed. A three man team is now checking the maps of all species for the last time.

The starting up of the Banding Computer System has also progressed well. All data collected since 1976 are now in the system except for a batch of about 1000 incorrect records. Unfortunately corrections cannot be made at this stage as the budget for computing for this financial year is already greatly overspent, mainly due to work for the Bird Atlas. Preliminary work only for the corrections will be done up to March 1983, when new funds will become available.

A report on bird banding in New Zealand for the 1981/82 season has been prepared and will be printed shortly. Copies of the report will be issued free of charge and may be ordered from the Banding Office.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

Banding Mail Bag

Band returns for the period September to November totalled 239 and covered 19 species: 82 Canada Geese; 51 ducks (Mallard & Grey); 18 Paradise Ducks; 16 Shoveler Ducks; 12 Black Swans; 19 Red-billed Gulls; 11 Black-backed Gulls; 6 Blue Penguins; 7 Pied Shags; 4 Silvereyes; 4 Starlings; 1 Wrybill; 1 White-fronted Tern; 3 Spotted Shags; 1 Wandering Albatross; 1 Royal Albatross; 1 Gannet and 1 Blackbird.

In addition 17 recaptures of Wrybill were reported and the following species had individuals reported either by the sighting of colour band combinations or neck collars: Red-billed Gull (34); Mallard (9); SIPO (1); South Island Robin (2) and Canada Goose (1).

Some interesting recoveries:

E-92126 Grey-faced Petrel, banded as a chick on Whale Island, Bay of Plenty,

on 12/12/71 was recovered breeding (on nest with egg) at the South Heads, Hokianga Harbour, on 13/7/82.

R-29174 Wandering Albatross, banded as an adult of unknown sex at Adams Island, Auckland Islands, on 23/1/73. The bird was recovered dead on Trial Bay Beach, about 400 km north of Sydney, over 2400 km from the banding site.

D-111295 Blackbird, banded as an adult male at Te Puke on 6/11/75, was recovered dead near the site of banding on 17/11/82.

L-13826 Westland Black Petrel, banded as an adult female near Punakaiki on 17/5/70. The bird was recovered alive and healthy in the same area on 21/6/82.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

South Auckland Labour Weekend wader study

Thirty-three people attended the 3-day course held at Waiau Pa during Labour Weekend. These were mainly Aucklanders and South Aucklanders who were pleased to be joined by members from Bay of Plenty and Manawatu. The expected annual blast of Labour Weekend weather did not spoil any field trips, though it did curtail one; and Monday's beach patrol from Karioitahi to Waikato Heads was held in a stiff wind, an exhilarating experience to say the least! Camp Morley's well appointed flats and the excellent meeting halls/kitchen complex proved ideal for our needs. The site is on the southern Manukau shore and is handily placed for excursions to a number of places. Nan Rothwell, aided by Hazel and Tom Harty, produced wonderful meals which were greatly appreciated.

Two mornings were taken up by talks on a wide range of topics. Speakers included Doug Booth, Beth Brown, Murray Douglas, Brian Ellis, Brian Gill, Bruce Goffin, Byrdie Mann, Betty Searle, Dick Sibson, Michael Taylor and Dick Veitch. Other participants were David Baker, Kathy Barrow, Betty Binning, Margaret Bishop, Ken Bond, Barbara Burch, Simon Chamberlain, Bob & Sybil Creswell, Peter Druitt, Lyn Duff, Nola Dyson, Claire Exley, Malcolm Hutton, Joyce Key-Jones, Kahtleen Ryan, Paul Schofield, Avice Stewart and Roy Weston.

As usual the Manukau Harbour turned on some good birds and some members were delighted to notch up their first Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler and Mongolian Dotterel among the throngs of other shorebirds.

BETH BROWN

The South West Pacific Expedition on Derwent - Part 2

We set sail on 17/8/82 from Lautoka, bound for Port Vila on the island of Efate, Vanuatu. Aboard were the regular crew — Tony Crocker, Andy Davis, Steve Dawson, Gillian Eller, Tim Lovegrove and Chris White — plus Maria Hansby, who joined 'Derwent' a few days before we left Lautoka.

The south east tradewinds were blowing savagely by mid-August and it was a brisk downwind passage for the 500 nautical miles to Vila, the journey taking just four days. The stormy weather did not make for easy seawatching and it was impossible to use binoculars on deck, but there were few birds about. Species recorded on this trip included the local petrels — Collared, Tahiti, Phoenix and Herald, plus both species of Tropicbird, Red-footed Boobies, Sooty Terns and Crested Terns.

We arrived in Vila on a Saturday, so we spent the remainder of the weekend in forced confinement, moored to the quarantine buoy waiting for Monday and the arrival of customs. Meanwhile the rain continued and the south east tradewind blew relentlessly.

Because of the inclement weather we abandoned our plan to sail north the 100 nautical miles to the large and rather little-known island of Malekula. In our original itinerary we had allowed time only for a brief stopover in Vanuatu en route to New Caledonia. Fortunately the weather cleared a few days before our planned departure date and we seized the opportunity to make a hurried survey of some of the forests on Efate. On the forested slopes above Havannah Harbour, on the northern side of the island, we located a good selection of the birds that occur on the southern islands of Vanuatu. The list included: Swamp Harrier, Megapode, Banded Rail, Tanna Fruit Dove, Red-bellied Fruit Dove, Pacific Pigeon, Rufous-brown Pheasant Dove, Green-winged Ground Pigeon, Coconut Lory, Vanikoro Swiftlet, Glossy Swiftlet, White-collared Kingfisher, Long-tailed Triller, Fantail Warbler, Spotted Fantail, Collared Fantail, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Buff-bellied Flycatcher, Golden Whistler, White-breasted Wood-Swallow, Silver-eared Honeyeater, Cardinal Honeyeater and Yellow Silvereye.

We departed Port Vila on 27/8/82 and headed south to the island of Lifou — the large middle island of the French administered Loyalty Group. This was the first real windward leg of the voyage to date; it was quite remarkable that we had sailed so far, nearly 4500 nautical

miles, with the wind abeam and astern. We covered the 200 nautical miles to Lifou in just over 36 hours. It was rather a lean passage for seabirds, the most notable records being some probable Collared Petrels just south of Efate, and a group of Tahiti Petrels off Cape Lefevre, the western tip of Lifou.

From our anchorage in Baie de Gaatcha, Lifou presented an extraordinary profile — an extensive forested plain, fringed by sheer limestone cliffs. On the headlands the skyline was punctuated with the spectacular groves of lofty New Caledonia pines.

We visited the village headman and obtained permission to look at the surrounding forests, where we were particularly interested to examine the status of the endemic silvereyes — the Large Lifou Silvereye and the Small Lifou Silvereye, and the distinctive endemic subspecies of the Grey-backed Silvereye.

The Large Lifou Silvereye was quite common in dense low forest just inland from Gaatcha. It had a powerful song, which sounded rather like a short burst of Island Thrush song. This is a robust species, which lacks the white eye ring. The Small Lifou Silvereye was numerous and small flocks were often seen in the canopy. The Grey-backed Silvereye was also common. This subspecies has a black face and the eye ring shows up very clearly.

On Lifou we saw our first *Gerygone* warblers of the voyage. The Yellow-sided Warbler is not unlike our Grey Warbler in size and colouration and its aimless song is unmistakably Riro. Honeyeaters were numerous here also, especially the Silver-eared and Cardinal. A few Friarbirds were recorded, including one curiously coloured individual, which was pale beige all over. Other species noted were Australian Goshawk, Red-bellied Fruit Dove, Green-winged Ground Pigeon, Shining Cuckoo, White-rumped Swiftlet, Glossy Swiftlet, Long-tailed Triller, Melanesian Greybird, Spotted Fantail, Collared Fantail, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Golden Whistler, White-breasted Wood Swallow and Glossy Starling.

The next leg of our voyage was the short overnight hop to the Havannah Passage, the main reef entrance for vessels approaching Noumea from the north and east. Once inside the reef we paused for a night at a delightful anchorage in the lee of Ile Casey, a small island in the extensive Baie du Prony. Ile Casey is well forested and carries good numbers of the common forest birds of southern New Caledonia.

Like many of the small islands around

New Caledonia, Ile Casey has its own pair of Ospreys, and these often perched high in the *Araucarias* at one end of the island. Scarlet and Silver-eared Honeyeaters were numerous in the forest, and in the scrubland of the interior the Barred Honeyeaters were yodelling. Other forest inhabiting species included Golden Whistler, Yellow Robin, Red-throated Parrot Finch, Green-backed Silvereye and Grey-backed Silvereye.

It was a pleasant off-the-wind ride northwards via the Woodin Passage on the 30 nautical miles to Noumea. On arrival we were greeted by Anton Habraken and George Schiska, who were joining 'Derwent's' permanent crew for the voyage back to New Zealand.

In Noumea we were met by Yves Letocart, a ranger from the Service des Eaux et Forêts, who was to be our guide during our stay in New Caledonia. Yves Letocart and a colleague, Francis Hannecart, have recently written a book on the birds of New Caledonia (reviewed by Paddy Latham *Notornis* 29: 162). Both are keen ornithologists and accomplished amateur photographers.

Yves is responsible for looking after the magnificent 16,000 ha forest reserve at Haute Yate, about 50 km inland from Noumea. About half of the park is covered with the extraordinary shrubland communities which grow on the impoverished ultra-basic soils. The remainder has dense forests of mature New Caledonia Kauri and many other species, including *Araucaria* and *Nothofagus*. New Caledonia is a botanist's paradise with some 3,500 species of higher plants, of which about 80% are endemic. This is twice as many as may be found in New Zealand — all in an area about the size of Northland.

We spent four days in the forests at Haute Yate, especially in the area near La Riviere Bleue — the main objective being to look at habitat of New Caledonia's unique national bird, the flightless Kagu. Yves has been carrying out a survey, and he estimates that there are 30-40 Kagus in this area. This remarkable bird is only found in the southern third of New Caledonia, and is threatened by loss of habitat and predators, such as marauding dogs and feral cats.

The New Caledonians seem to have mastered breeding the Kagu in captivity. During the past two or three years about 12 have been raised in special enclosures at the Parc Forestier on the outskirts of Noumea. In its natural habitat the Kagu seems to prefer places with only moderate slopes. However,

much of the forest at Yate is growing on very steep country, so there are only a few places which have ideal habitat.

The Kagu's food apparently consists mostly of insects and snails, which are obtained from the forest floor. Wild pigs have certainly thinned out the large *Placostylus* land snails — it was not unusual to see the broken shells of these snails where pigs had been feeding.

Yves pointed out several of the surrounding forested peaks, which he knows to have breeding petrels — e.g. Tahiti and New Caledonian Petrels. None of these peaks has been searched properly yet. There was plenty of cat sign on the old forestry roads, so the smaller petrels must be suffering heavy losses. Wild pigs also prey on the birds. We were told that one pig killed recently contained the remains of five New Caledonian Petrels.

The Yate forest also had many other species of forest inhabiting birds. Especially interesting was the large Crow Honeyeater — another of the curious *Gymnomyza* species, related to the Giant Forest Honeyeater of Fiji and the Ma'oa of Western Samoa. The Crow Honeyeater is by far the largest of the *Gymnomyza* species — nearly the size of our extinct Huia. It is entirely black with an ivory-coloured bill and orange facial wattles. The Crow Honeyeater has an extraordinary repertoire of unusual growling, clicking and bell-like notes. Their rhythmical clicking song ending with a single bell note was a distinctive sound in the dawn chorus at La Riviere Bleue. This species has a very limited distribution in New Caledonia.

The other honeyeaters numerous at Yate included the Silver-eared, Scarlet and Barred, and the noisy Friarbirds. The Giant Pigeon was common and its resonant didgeridoo notes were a feature of the forest. In one valley there was an area of fruiting *Pandanus* where a number of these large and rather rare fruit pigeons were feeding. Another rare New Caledonian pigeon, the Cloven-feathered Dove, also occurred in this area. Other species of note in the Yate forest were the endemic White-bellied Hawk, the Red-crowned and Crested Parakeets, and the two large shrikes, the Melanesian and Mountain Greybirds.

Along the shores of the Yate Hydro Lake we saw Little Shag, White-faced Heron, Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier. In nearby scrubland was Red-throated Parrot Finch.

Back in Noumea we visited a small raupo fringed lake at La Riviere Sallee, where a small flock of Australian White-

eyed Ducks have recently become established. Grey Teal and Grey Duck were also present, along with Australian Little Grebe, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen (another species which has recently established in New Caledonia) and Spotless Crake.

We took Yves Letocart aboard 'Derwent' for the first part of our voyage southwards — from Noumea to the Ile des Pins. En route we stopped at several small islands in the lagoon. One of these was Ile Mbe, where we found a small colony of Fairy Terns, a flock of waders and an Osprey.

The Fairy Terns were of particular interest because they seemed to have a rather curious combination of Fairy and Little Tern features — the head markings of Fairy Terns, but the black-tipped bill of Little Terns. Don Hadden has recorded similar terns in the North Solomons.

The wader flock consisted of 14 Turnstones, 10 Golden Plovers and 2 Bar-tailed Godwits. We were particularly interested to look at the Turnstones on Ile Mbe, for it was here that Francis Hannecart found this species breeding a couple of years ago. It seems that this extraordinary breeding did take place in two successive years. We were ashore at the right time of the year but found no sign of nests or young.

Nearby Ile Atire was honeycombed with the empty burrows of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. An Osprey nest, in a *Casuarina* just above the beach where we landed, contained two large chicks. White-capped Noddies evidently roosted in considerable numbers in the *Casuarina* scrub, and several pairs of Red-billed Gulls also bred there.

The next day we visited the extensive Yves Merlet Marine Reserve, which lies between the southern tip of La Grand Terre and the Ile des Pins. Entry into this 16,000 ha area, comprising exposed and sheltered coral reefs, and two forested petrel islands is by permit only; so the park suffers very little human disturbance.

We landed on Ile Amere, the more southerly of the two islands. This is covered with a dense mantle of lofty *Araucaria* and mixed broadleaf forest. As on Ile Atire the ground was heavily burrowed by Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. On the white coral sand two pairs of Fairy Terns were nesting, and there was a small flock of Red-billed Gulls, Crested Terns and Black-naped Terns.

We had a favourable wind for the rest of the run along the inner edge of the reef to Ile des Pins, where we anchored at Baie Kuto. The forests

near Kuto have quite a good bird population. However, the best area was at Gadji, on the northern corner of the island. We were dropped at an old sawmill site, from which disused forestry tracks radiated out into the forest like the spokes of a giant wheel. Milling stopped there some years ago, and much of the broadleaf forest is still in good condition. There are magnificent stands of tall *Araucaria* pines along the nearby coastline. We found the elusive Cloven-feathered Dove quite common in this forest.

Not far away, on a shallow reach of Gadji Bay there was a flock of 70 Bar-tailed Godwits, 12 Asiatic Whimbrels, about 30 Crested Terns and 50 Red-billed Gulls. Overhead were six Ospreys and Welcome Swallows and swiftlets were flitting low over the water. On another stretch of the coast near Kuto we located Wandering Tattler and Golden Plover.

We said farewell to Yves Letocart on 15/9/82, when he flew back to Noumea, and we set out on the 950 nautical mile voyage homewards. It was an idyllic ocean passage with a fair wind abeam and calm seas for almost the entire trip. It was an excellent passage for logging seabirds. The highlight was seeing the returning migrant Short-tailed Shearwaters. They were heading southwest on a very broad front, which extended from just south of Ile des Pins to about 100 nautical miles north of the Three Kings.

Our first Cape Pigeon appeared just south of Ile des Pins, and from there onwards there were always some Cape Pigeons accompanying us. Further south we had Wandering Albatrosses and Grey-faced Petrels in the wake.

We passed a few miles east of Norfolk Island on the fourth day at sea. Birds were numerous near the island, especially Little Shearwaters, Blue-faced Boobies, White Terns, Sooty Terns and Grey Ternlets.

Approaching the Three Kings we began to log some of the familiar species. There were large numbers of Buller's Shearwaters, Fluttering Shearwaters, White-faced Storm Petrels, Fairy Prions and Diving Petrels off Cape Karikari. The Buller's Shearwaters were in tens of thousands, a northward moving mass of birds extending as far as the eyes could see.

The wind began to lighten off Cape Brett, and next morning we were becalmed in a glassy sea off Bream Head — only a stone's throw from home! We motored the remaining 20 nautical miles up the Whangarei Harbour — home

again after some 5500 nautical miles of sailing and the ornithological experience of a lifetime.

TIM LOVEGROVE

Publications

The moon: a neglected factor in studies on collisions of nocturnal birds with tall lighted structures and with aircraft. F. J. Verheijen. *Die Vogelwarte* 30: 305-320. 1980. The accident rate seemed to be appreciably higher around new moon.

Zur Winternahrung des Sanderlings. A. von Plucinski. *Ornith. Mitteilungen* 34: 8-11. 1982. Photos of Sanderlings in winter plumage.

Possible capture myopathy in Bar-tailed Godwits in Australia. D. Purchase & C. D. T. Minton. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 34: 24-26. The birds most affected were females in fat condition and symptoms were not necessarily immediately apparent on release.

Further confirmation of breeding of White-fronted Terns in the Furneaux Group, Bass Strait. G. Davis & M. Mykytowycz. *Australian Bird Watcher* 9: 158-164.

Radar & visual observations of trans-pacific migrants. P. D. Kloekner, J. M. Williams & T. C. Williams. *Elepaio* 42: 77-80. 1982. Radar observations from Oahu and Maui during the autumn migration did not reveal any birds overflying the islands on their way south, though there was a considerable influx of migrants during the observation period.

Breeding of the Grey Warbler Gerygone igata at Kaikoura, New Zealand. B. J. Gill. *Ibis* 124: 123-147. 1982. Song, territories, mating, adult survival and longevity, breeding season, nests, eggs, nestlings, fledglings, breeding cycle and breeding success are described in detail from studies completed during 1976-79. This is an important and interesting paper about a native forest bird.

Birds of Tawhiti Rahi Island, Poor Knights Group, Northland, New Zealand. J. McCallum. *Tane* 27: 59-66. 1981. The current status of shearwaters and petrels on Tawhiti Rahi are presented, with general notes on the avifauna recorded during September 1980.

Catalogue of anatomical specimens of living or recently extinct birds in the National Museum of New Zealand (NMNZ). Jan Gillette & J. A. Bartle. NMNZ Miscellaneous Series No. 5 1982. The catalogue includes both the N.Z. and foreign anatomical material in the collection. This totals 2314 specimens of birds, representing 293 taxa. Most of these are skeletons or part skeletons. However the catalogue does not include

the relatively large number of N.Z. sub-fossil and fossil bird specimens available in the National Museum.

Donnees preliminaires sur la distribution pelagique des oiseaux des T.A.A.F. P. Jouventin, J-L. Mougin, J-C. Stahl, J. A. Bartle & H. Weimerskirch. *Colloque sur les ecosytemes subantarctiques.* C.N. F.R.A. 51: 427-436. This paper details observations between Reunion Island, Crozet Islands, Kerguelen Island and New Amsterdam. Generally the number of species and biomass increases as one travels 64°S and approaches the islands. The distinction of pelagic and coastal species becomes apparent when distributions are plotted. A comparison is made of the distributions of each species during the non-breeding period and there is a general migration northwards during this period. Data are given on the distribution of immature albatrosses and on the moulting zones of some species.

Moult of juvenile Curlew Sandpipers in southern Australia. D. C. Paton, B. J. Wykes & P. Dann. *The Emu* 82: 55-56. 1982. The moult of 259 Curlew Sandpipers, including 177 juveniles, caught near Melbourne was recorded. Juveniles arrived later than adults with comparatively new primaries which contrasted with the old, very worn feathers of adults. By January their primaries were worn and contrasted with the now new primaries of adults.

PAUL SAGAR & ANTHEA GOODWIN

Little Black Shag at Kaikoura

Driving around Kaikoura Peninsula on 16/7/82 I paused by Fyffe Cottage to add to my bird list 10 Little Shags that were sitting in a group on a rocky outcrop. Fortunately I took a second, more careful look at them, and was surprised to see that one was a Little Black Shag. There was no doubt about it — the slender grey bill and distinctive feather pattern distinguished it from the nine Little Shags.

I have seen Little Black Shags at Nelson — 12 at the Waimea Estuary on 20/3/82, and two at the pond by the main road at Atawhai on 30/4/82. However, they are seldom reported from areas further south. On 21/8/82 I saw a Little Black Shag at Seal Island, Kaikoura, just over 1 km from the area of the first sighting. Unfortunately I have no way of knowing whether this was the same bird or not. On the latter occasion the bird was alone, although there were two Pied Shags about 15 m away.

B. ELLIOTT

Harrier mustering grasshoppers

On 15/3/82 on a very warm day at about 1600 m in the Old Man Range we watched a Harrier stalking, flushing and catching alpine grasshoppers from the high-altitude tussock, which here is a *Chionochloa macra/Poa colensoi* association. Occasionally it raised its wings to flush the grasshoppers from hiding. Two species of grasshopper were present: the large common *Sigaus australis* and a smaller orange-tipped local species *Alpinacris tumicauda*.

PETER & MARGARET CHILD

Birds' nests and cats

In our garden of about 0.3 ha at Clifton Hill, Sumner, we regularly have nests of Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, finches, Silvereyes, Hedge Sparrows, Grey Warblers and Fantails. However, the Bellbirds leave us during summer.

At least four cats from neighbouring properties patrol the area and cause havoc to most nestlings in nests below 4 m. However, Fantails were successful in raising at least three broods during the summer of 1981/82. Recently while topping some of the taller trees I discovered a Fantail and a Chaffinch nest, both at a height of about 10 m. This seems to be higher than usual and may be a response to the presence of the cats. GEORGE GUY

White Heron feeding

On 18/7/82 we disturbed two White Herons which were in a field of corn stubble beside a Napier road. Both birds flew off together and one landed beside a small stream, about 700 m away. The other bird continued on for a further 700 m before settling in another field of corn stubble. Fortunately both birds were near the road and so we were able to observe them closely.

The heron in the stubble field proceeded to stalk slowly, pausing often. For much of the time the bill was pointed skywards as the bird moved along. Once we saw it catch something but it was too small to identify. After swallowing it the bird waved and gyrated its head and neck repeatedly with bill upwards, even though the food item must have been very small as no bulge was seen in the bird's throat. We have not noticed this swallowing action in White Herons we have seen fishing. Could it be that dry prey are more difficult to swallow?

P. W. & M. TWYDLE

A note about the 'lousy list' (Supplement to Notornis 29)

Many OSNZ members may have looked at the first pages of our list of New Zealand lice and found that it was just a lot of long, meaningless, tongue-twisting scientific names which add nothing to their interest in birds. Then, they may have thrown it away in a drawer or on a shelf together with other lists which are never looked at again.

We have to agree that scientific names are usually awkward words with very little, if any, meaning for most people, unless one understands some basic Latin and Greek words. However, we ask readers to forget about the meaning and pronunciation of the names, and just look at them as if they were visual symbols which identify different beasts. Then we can give you some hints on how to use our 'lousy list' to obtain information which, hopefully, would be of interest to you all.

In general terms, closely related birds are parasitized by the same or by similar lice. As an example we can look at entries 18.a. to 26. (albatrosses and mollymawks). By comparing the sets of binomial (double) names under each bird name, we can soon realise that in all the entries the first words (the generic names) are repeated, but that the second words (the specific names) are repeated in such a way that two groups can be made: one from entries 18.a. to 19.b. (the larger albatrosses) and the second from entries 20.a. to 26. (the smaller mollymawks). There are some lice names missing under some of the bird names, in particular for entry 22., but we believe that further collecting will fill these gaps. However, the available evidence suggests that the pattern of lice distribution will not be changed. We can now say that, according to their lice, the larger albatrosses are more closely related to each other than to any of the smaller mollymawks, and vice versa. Fortunately ornithological evidence agrees with our 'lousy' conclusion.

This exercise of comparing sets of lice from different birds can be done for all of them at any taxonomic level (order, family, genus, species and subspecies), and by taking any number of different bird taxa at any one time. Then, have a go and find out what the lice tell us about the relations between the Procellariiformes and the Charadriiformes; which petrels are most closely related to those of the genus *Procellaria*? Should the Tropic Birds belong to the Pelecaniformes or to another order? Would you leave the Blue Petrel alone

in its own genus or rather lump it into a larger one? Should the Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwaters remain as separate species or be regarded as subspecies of the Manx Shearwater?

Always beware of the so-called 'secondary infestations'! But how? They are difficult to detect and very much open to speculation. The long standing argument on the close relationships between kiwis and rails is now going out of fashion. Although their lice point in that direction, we have to yield to the heavier weight of ornithological evidence and to consider the possibility of a successful secondary infestation between their ancestors as a better explanation for the present day distribution of *Rallicola* spp. Also, we can be quite sure that the Huia obtained its lice by the same process, rather than considering it as a highly modified rail!

Finally, we would like once more to draw your attention to the many 'bird gaps' (138 of them) within the list. Many of these birds are regular visitors, such as the migratory waders, others are not so regular, such as the Nankeen Night Heron and the frigate birds and quite a few are rare stragglers like the phalaropes, the Long-tailed Skua, and the Australian water hens. Among those breeding in New Zealand, outstanding gaps are the Reef Heron, Long-tailed Cuckoo and all the subspecies of Fernbird. Most OSNZ members would have, at one time or another, the chance of finding, handling or catching any of the birds *not* listed in our paper (whose names are easily found by comparison with the OSNZ Checklist and/or the Amendments and Additions). Your cooperation in obtaining lice from these birds would be greatly appreciated.

R. L. PALMA & R. L. C. PILGRIM

OSNZ ties

A few more ties have become available but this will be your last opportunity to obtain one. The price is still only \$6.00 each.

Council have decided against placing a further order so be quick if you want one. Obtainable from B. D. Bell, 9 Ferry Road, Wellington 3.

B. D. BELL

Beach Patrol scheme

The Beach Patrol ended on 31 December and so I would appreciate your records from patrols, even nil results, sent to me as soon as possible. This allows time for an interim report to be prepared for presentation at the AGM

in May. Those members who need more beach patrol and/or specimen record cards please let me know.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Cuckoo summer

The 1981/82 summer seems to have been particularly favourable for both species of cuckoo, and especially the Long-tailed. They have been heard frequently in the forested valleys of Mount Aspiring National Park, especially the Rees, Routeburn and Matukituki.

I wonder if there has been any noticeable change further north?

PETER CHILD

Regional Roundup

South Auckland: Beth Brown reports that Karaka had 9 Red-necked Stints on 21/10 and 12 on 14/11. Curlew Sandpipers have been passing through, with 9 on 21/10, c20 on 7/11 and 2 on 14/11. One Terek Sandpiper and the long-staying Grey-tailed Tattler were present on 21/10.

Access Bay, in the Firth of Thames, was noteworthy on 10/11 for 34 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 11 Red-necked Stints and a long, hard chase when 3 Curlew Sandpipers chased a Little Tern for something over 5 minutes. One of the sandpipers dropped out but the close harassment continued until the birds were out of sight to the north of Taramaire. In spite of many rocket-like climbs and even faster dives the tern could not avoid pursuit.

Bay of Plenty: The Greenshank was still present at Tauranga Harbour until at least 27/7/82, having been seen many times since 27/11/77. Brian Chudleigh saw a Black Stilt and a smudgy stilt in the area from 17/7/82 to 5/9/82.

Paddy Latham reports that a Marsh Sandpiper was present at the Kaituna Cut, Maketu, from mid-February to 19/6. Two Black-fronted Dotterels were seen in this area during July by Graeme Taylor and one was there in August. More migratory waders had arrived by 2/11, when Graeme Taylor counted 17 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 31 Golden Plovers, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 3 Red-necked Stints, 290 Bar-tailed Godwits, 8 Knots and 11 Turnstones. In addition, New Zealand Dotterels had raised at least 5 chicks.

Beach patrolling produced two surprises for Paddy Latham last winter, a Wilson's Storm Petrel and a female New Zealand Falcon.

Volcanic Plateau: By 17/11 the Little Black Shag colony at Sulphur Bay, Lake

Rotorua, had 1000+ adults in attendance and there were at least 157 nests with eggs and a few chicks had hatched. *Hawkes Bay*: P. W. & M. Twydle report that on 3/9/82 members of the region observed two pairs of Dabchicks displaying in a sheltered arm of Horse-shoe Lake. The display was completed in silence as the birds stretched their necks and heads low over the water, while moving them from side to side, sometimes each bird facing its mate and sometimes side by side. Before and after this display, which continued for about two minutes, the birds were diving and feeding in the usual manner. At times the two pairs were close to each other but no aggression was noted.

Manawatu/Wanganui: On 19/9 a group of members found 19 Cattle Egrets with a herd of cattle near the Foxton No. 1 Lake. Cattle Egrets had not been seen in the lake area for several weeks prior to this, whereas in previous years the flock has been more or less resident at the lake.

Wellington: A Crested Tern was seen at Waikanae Estuary by Alan Tennyson on 2/10. The monthly counts at Pau-tahanui are producing worthwhile results and on 19/9 a notable find was a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, seen by Roy Slack and Noel Hellyer.

Nelson: A Fairy Martin was seen at Puponga Farm Park by Brian Bell on 17/11.

Canterbury: That roving ornithologist Graeme Taylor visited Lake Ellesmere on 12/11 and the birds seen included 92 Red-necked Stints, 7 Knot, 2 Wry-bills, 64 Banded Dotterels (including many fledglings) and c.500 Grey Teal.

Curlew Sandpiper numbers at Lake Ellesmere seem to be down on the previous two summers, with 13 being the maximum counted up to 1/12. In previous summers numbers have been up to 60 by this time.

West Coast: Migratory waders are uncommon on the West Coast but this spring/summer some rare migratory waders have been reported from the region. Stewart Lauder found an Oriental Dotterel at Greymouth airport in September and in late November Derek Onley saw 3 Grey Plovers at Orowaiti.

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

Smudgy Black Stilt at Lake Grassmere

On 16/10/82 a party of 5 OSNZ members from Marlborough — Jack Taylor, Stuart Kennigton, Pauline Jenkins, Pam Thynne and Donald Bate —

visited Lake Grassmere to survey the migratory waders. Surprisingly none was present. However, after noting a pair of Banded Dotterels with mobile chicks, the party set off on foot along the back of the coastal sand dunes towards the salt works intake.

On a small lagoon were about 130 Black Swans (including 2 green and 1 orange neck banded birds), 5 Mallards, 21 Shoveler Ducks, 8 Pied Shags and 24 Pied Stilts. Eventually the birds scattered and the attention of members was drawn to the call of a Pied Stilt as it made two attacking passes at a smudgy Black Stilt. One member noted that the call of the Black Stilt differed from that of the Pied Stilt. The Black Stilt flew off in company with Black Swans, not with the other stilts.

The Black Stilt was relocated nearer the intake, feeding in company with 3 Pied Stilts. It was clearly visible from about 30 m and the following features were noted: It was a dark sooty appearance, giving a blotchy appearance; there was lighter shading to cheeks, neck and vent, with a lighter stripe on the wing; it was entirely black on the crown and back; the legs and bill were the same colour as those of the Pied Stilts it accompanied.

The apparent reluctance of the Black Stilt to mix closely with the other stilts was abruptly forgotten with the sudden advance of a stinging hail storm. While the party ran for cover the flock of stilts, including the smudgy one, huddled together and remained in a tight group for about five minutes before finally scattering just prior to the end of the storm. During the storm the Pied Shags repeatedly dived below the water, apparently to escape from the hailstones.

For many of the party this was the first time they had seen a smudgy Black Stilt.

PAULINE JENKINS

A new species of sandpiper

A new sandpiper of the genus *Calidris* by S. A. Parker (*South Australian Naturalist*, June 1982) describes Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotus* from two specimens collected in South Australia. The new species resembles the Pectoral Sandpiper in size, shape of the tail and pigments of the primary shafts. However, it differs in having the bill longer and more extensively blackish, also the legs are dark olive instead of yellowish. The pectoral zone is lighter and less clearly demarcated.

A fuller account of the new species, plus a colour plate, is planned for the *Records of the South Australian Museum*.

High altitude Wekas

On 15 January 1982 while looking for Rock Wrens on the western side of Copland Pass I was surprised to come upon a pair of Wekas in the tussock and fellfield at about 1500 m altitude. They were very approachable and were busily feeding on the orange berries of *Coprosma pumila*.

PETER CHILD

Yellowhead study

Council of OSNZ has suggested that members undertake an investigation of Yellowheads. This species is of particular interest in that, while not classified as an 'endangered species,' its range seems to be much reduced in recent years. This investigation is an opportunity to describe in detail the retraction of the species range through the documentation of historical records and to establish an accurate record of the present distribution which may help to predict future changes.

A map of records from the *Bird Distribution Atlas* and Classified Summarised Notes for the period 1970 to 1982 will help members pick any gaps in our knowledge.

Members are encouraged to assist this study in two ways:

- (1) by providing historical records from old notebooks and reports from reliable sources.
- (2) by field work to establish more accurately the present distribution.

The present distribution appears to be centred on Fiordland and the Arthurs Pass National Park with birds seldom being encountered in other areas. The map will help identify areas that appear to be on the edge of the species range and where their presence is uncertain. Few records are from N.W. Nelson, Marlborough and the Paparoas and these are very localised. Although recorded from the Nelson Lakes National Park in the early 1970's they have not been seen there since. The Catlins population is also very localised and isolated as are the birds in parts of Otago and Southland.

If sufficient interest is shown by members in studying this species a more intensive programme of field work incorporating habitats and feeding niches will be organised. More copies of the map are readily available.

I look forward to any feedback and suggestions for this study. These should be addressed to: P. D. Gaze, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Nelson.

P. D. GAZE

Yellowhead records 1970 - 82

