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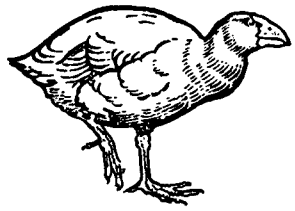

OSNZ news

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4, for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject to confirmation.

No.44 September, 1987

Note Deadline for the December issue will be 15th November.

Congratulations to Gerry Clark MBE

The Society congratulates Gerry Clark on being awarded an MBE for his services to ornithology.

Early in 1983 Gerry set out as the leader of the *Totorore* expedition to circumnavigate the southern oceans while conducting research programmes sponsored by the various international organisations, including OSNZ. The main objective was to expand the available information on the seabird populations of the southern oceans. These additions to the growing international pool of data will enable the nations responsible for the world's southern islands and oceans to make adequately researched plans for the conservation, management and protection of the unique animal and bird species which inhabit these parts of the world.

Thoughout the 3 years and 8 months of the expedition Gerry Clark has been able to show what a dedicated amateur ornithologist and master mariner can achieve.

New Secretary for the Rare Birds Committee

OSNZ is about to lose its second successive Rare Birds Committee Secretary across the Tasman. This does not reflect on the tasks undertaken by the RBC Secretary, and it must be stressed that emigration is not one of the conditions of taking on the position.

In October John Fennell departs NZ to take a new job in Tasmania. The Society takes this oportunity to wish John and his family all the very best in their new life, and to thank you for your many services to NZ ornithology.

From 1 October the new Secretary of the Rare Birds Committee will be Dr M.J. Imber, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box10420, Wellington.

National Wader Count – November 1987

A note to remind members that there will be another national wader count this summer. Therefore now is the time to contact your RR and volunteer to assist.

A report on the summer 1986 and winter 1987 counts will appear in the next isue of *OSNZ news*.

PAUL SAGAR, *Coordinator National Wader Counts*

OSNZ 50th Anniversary

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Ornithological Society in 1990, the OSNZ Council has proposed that an issue of *Notornis* that year be a special issue containing notes on the history of the Society. It has been suggested that such a special number should include some, or all, of the following:

(1) An "official" account of the Society's history, with lists of past presidents etc.
(2) Brief accounts of the origin and progress of the Society's main projects - *Notornis*, Nest Record Scheme, Beach Patrol Scheme, and the Atlas.
(3) Reminiscences from some of the Society's senior members.
(4) A review of local ornithological progress for each of the main groups of birds, written by an expert on that group.

In the months ahead various people will be invited to contribute, but at this stage the council would also like to hear from members in general. Please send comments, suggestions and offers of assistance to:
B.J. Gill, Auckland Museum, Private Bag, Auckland.
B.J. GILL

The Field Investigation Officer

This position was set up at the November 1986 Council meeting in response to a need to have someone on the Council who is responsible for coordinating and helping to plan OSNZ's projects. The Council invited me to take this position and prepare terms of reference for this position, for consideration at the May 1987 Council meeting. David Crockett had suggested terms of reference for a Field Investigation Committee, and these form the core of the roles listed below.

1. Oversee the Society's major Schemes.

These currently comprise the Beach Patrol, Moult Recording, Nest Record and Recording Schemes. The Field Investigation Officer will maintain a close liason with the coordinator of each scheme so that any problems can be brought quickly to the attention of Council. The Field Investigation Officer will encourage the publication and use of results from these schemes and try to stimulate participation in them.

2. Maintain a register of all OSNZ projects.

In *OSNZ news 28* (September 1983), Paul Sagar produced a list of current and recently completed projects done in the Society at regional and national levels. The Field Investigation Officer will update the list regularly, after consulting the RRs, and check progress with each project organiser.

3. Assist with the form of projects, if required.

The Field Investigation Officer will be available to give advice on the study design and analysis of data, where required. The Field Investigation Officer will encourage and give advice on the publication of the results of these studies.

4. Consider, and promote, new ornithological studies.

The Field Investigation Officer will be available to consider and evaluate proposals for new regional and national studies, and to advocate them at Council meetings.

5. Maintain contact between the Ornithological Society and other organisations in New Zealand that study birds.

Government Departments such as Department of Conservation, DSIR, and Ministry of Forests, and museums, universities, zoos and various societies do studies of New Zealand birds. The Field Investigation Officer will regularly ask

these organisations what work they are doing and offer the assistance of the Ornithological Society, where appropriate.

6. Maintain contact with similar organisations overseas to keep track of the types of projects that are being conducted.

This will be done with a view to introducing similar studies here, or to offer assistance wherever possible.

7. Receive applications for money from the Projects Assistance Reserve, check that they give enough information for Council to make its decision, and maintain a register of Projects Assistance Reserve grants.

The Field Investigation Officer will be responsible for handling all applications for funds from the Projects Assistance Reserve to ensure that enough information on study design, costs, status of the applicant (member/non-member) is available so that Council can make prompt decisions. The Field Investigation Officer will draw up a standard form for members to use when applying for money from the Projects Assistance Reserve. The Field Investigation Officer will not make specific recommendations to Council on the merits of applications. In the past, no track has been kept of how the money given from the Projects Assistance Reserve has been used. The Field Investigation Officer will maintain contact with receivers of grants to see that they at least report to the OSNZ Council on the results of their study.

H.A. ROBERTSON

Species for Special Study

OSNZ has two major on-going special studies of species: the documentation of the annual migration of Cattle Egrets, and the study of migration patterns of Banded Dotterels.

Cattle Egrets

The Cattle Egret study has involved an annual census in most years since 1977, when large numbers started to reach NZ. Barrie Heather has coordinated these counts and has provided initial results in *OSNZ news* and written 2 summaries on the status of the species in NZ, for *Notornis*. He has also encouraged 2 Manawatu members, Walter Jackson & Malcolm Olsen, to make detailed counts of a flock near Levin since 1983. The migration pattern set up by Cattle Egrets in NZ is unusual in the light of what has happened to this species elsewhere, where it has generally bred very quickly after reaching a new area. I know of no other successfully spreading species that shows this pattern. A good documentation of this event will prove to be of great interest to future researchers of colonisation patterns and migration. I consider that OSNZ should maintain its annual census of Cattle Egrets, and the results should continue to be published quickly in *OSNZ news*.

Banded Dotterels

The Banded Dotterel migration study has been an excellent example of trans-Tasman cooperation in the study of birds. About 1600 Banded Dotterels have been colour-banded on their breeding grounds in NZ over the past 2 summers, and 1732 have been banded in Australia, including 730 colour-banded in Victoria during the winter of 1986.

Ray Pierce has coordinated this study in New Zealand for the OSNZ, while Clive Minton and Mark Barter of the Victorian Wader Study Group have been behind the Australian input to the project. Sightings of colour-banded birds from both countries has lead to a very interesting insight into the migration patterns of this species.

The colour-banding programme in New Zealand is scheduled to continue for several summers yet, with the aim to mark more birds in the North Island, in particular. All OSNZ members can help in this special study by searching for colour-banded birds and by recording the number of birds checked (whether they have bands or not.) Cannon-netting in Australia has given important information on the moult patterns, measurements and weight changes of Banded Dotterels on their Australian wintering grounds. A comparison with the pattern observed in the New Zealand over-wintering population would be extremely interesting since the timing and energetics of migration are completely different (birds moving 10 km to their wintering grounds will not need the massive fat accumulation compared with those that fly 2000 km to or from Australia.)

The exciting results of this study to date suggest that OSNZ should very strongly support the continuation of this project.

Possible New Special Studies

1. Plumage forms of the Little Shag

In 2 recent papers that appeared in *Notornis*, Michael Taylor and John Dowding made a number of suggestions for further studies of the Little Shag in New Zealand. One suggestion was to record the number of birds in the various plumage-forms throughout the country. This would allow these 2 members to extend the genetic analysis that they performed. This project would be ideal for OSNZ members since Little Shags are widespread and common, and good drawings of the different plumage categories were published on page 47 of the March 1987 issue of *Notornis*. One particular problem that may occur is that members are often confused about the differences between the Little Shag and the Little Black Shag, but this study would help members to sharpen their identification skills of these 2 'tricky' species.

Michael Taylor has agreed to coordinate this project and members will be advised of details later.

2. Migration patterns of small passerines

Over recent years, evidence has accumulated that quite a number of small passerines (especially introduced European species) migrate north in the autumn and early winter (and hence south in late winter or spring). Observations at Farewell Spit in April and May, by Mike Dennison, Barrie Heather, Hugh Robertson and in particular, Derek Onley, have shown that at least Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Redpolls, Welcome Swallows and Silvereyes fly along the Spit and then head out to sea towards the North Island.

Paul Sagar, John Fennell, and other Canterbury members have banded large numbers of introduced passerines in Canterbury over recent years but have had only one recovery outside the region. Derek Onley has banded passerines on the West Coast and Farewell Spit, but has not had any long-distance recoveries yet. Ralph Powlesland and Hugh Robertson recently obtained permission from the Banding Office to band small passerines on the Wellington West Coast between Paekakariki and Tangimoana in the hope of detecting coastal movements within the region, and also to catch birds that have migrated from the South Island.

Involvement of OSNZ members in this project can be along 2 lines. First, Derek Onley gave good instructions on page 3 of the March 1987 issue of *OSNZ news* for the methods to record directional movements of small birds. These observations can be carried out anywhere in the country to detect true migration and local movements. Secondly, OSNZ members can help by assisting the banding operations already under way or planned. Ideally, a network of banding groups should be established throughout the country, but especially in the southern North Island and the South Island, with Marlborough, Nelson and Wanganui/south Taranaki being particularly important regions. It may well be possible to organise an OSNZ course where the skills necessary for mist-netting and banding would be taught. The Otaki-Levin area at Easter, or during the May holidays 1988 are possible times for such a course.

This is likely to be a long-term study which will introduce many OSNZ members to several new aspects of ornithology: observing and recording migration and local movements, and the mist-netting, handling, measuring, banding, and recording the moult of birds.

3. Status and movements of Black-fronted Dotterels

Since the Black-fronted Dotterel arrived in New Zealand in 1954, it has

become well-established and now breeds widely on riverbeds in Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Wairarapa, Marlborough and Canterbury regions, with smaller populations mainly in the Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Wellington, Otago, and Southland. The early spread in the North Island was well documented and supplemented by good counts in recent years in Hawkes Bay and parts of the Manawatu, however, the spread in the South Island has been given less attention. Monthly counts of the waders on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa by Barrie Heather and Hugh Robertson have revealed up to 130 Black-fronted Dotterels in the winter months. Simultaneous checks on some parts of the local Wairarapa rivers have shown that most birds that breed there are still present. This raised the question as to where the birds that appear at Lake Wairarapa come from. If they do not come from local rivers (as some of the Banded Dotterels do, judging by sightings of birds colour-banded by Dave Sim) then perhaps they come from the South Island, in the same way as Wrybills, SIPOs, Pied Stilts, and many Banded Dotterels do.

Colour-banding of Black-fronted Dotterels on their breeding grounds (perhaps using the same area codes as used in the Banded Dotterel study) and also on their main wintering grounds (such as Lake Wairarapa) could help to answer the question about the seasonal movements of this species. In addition, it is now almost 15 years since a full census of the Wairarapa rivers was completed, and about 9 years since the whole of the Manawatu, Oroua, and Rangitikei Rivers, and their major tributaries were covered. I know of no attempt to census Black-fronted Dotterels in the South island, apart from a survey of the Wairau River. A systematic survey of these rivers over the next 5 years is well warranted to assess the population levels as they are probably still growing. The Hawkes Bay region successfully completed a thorough survey of the 3 main rivers in their region by conducting a Labour Weekend camp in 1986 (following a washed-out attempt in 1985). This experience showed that a team of active people could cover considerable lengths of river bed in a weekend.

4. Dispersal of Red-billed Gulls from the Kaikoura Peninsula

Over the past 20 years, Jim Mills of the Wildlife Service (now Department of Conservation) has been doing a detailed study of the breeding biology and behaviour of Red-billed Gulls at Kaikoura Peninsula. During this study 3300 gulls have been individually colour-banded, and many others have been banded with 1 or 2 metal bands, or with a single colour. These colour-banded birds have been reported from as far away as Auckland, and form about 2% of the Red-billed Gull population seen around Wellington harbour during the monthly harbour census carried out by Wellington OSNZ members.

Because a large number of birds are colour-banded, and because Red-billed Gulls are approachable so that colour combinations can be read easily, it is now possible to investigate the pattern of post-breeding dispersal shown by birds of the different age and sex classes, breeders versus non-breeders, successful versus unsuccessful breeders, and chicks from different-sized broods. OSNZ members throughout the country can help this study immensely by noting and reporting combinations of all colour-banded Red-billed Gulls. In addition, it is possible to read the numbered metal bands on many birds with the aid of good binoculars or a telescope. Jim Mills will prepare an article for *OSNZ news*, giving some background to his study and outlining the way the information on colour-banded birds will be used in his analysis.

HUGH ROBERTSON, *Field Investigation Officer*

Ecology Division DSIR Bibliography 1946-1986

This 72-page indexed bibliography lists 810 items and covers the 40 years of published work of Ecology Division, DSIR. The main fields of study include the ecology of New Zealand land mammals (particularly the role of introduced mammals in New Zealand ecosystems) and birds (including agricultural pests). There are also papers on New Zealand lizards, invertebrates, vegetation studies, the ecology of many offshore islands, and others of a more general nature. From 1969 to 1982 the Division was also active in freshwater research, and a number of papers deal with this topic.

The Bibliography costs $10 and can be ordered from the Publications Officer, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Lower Hutt. Please make cheques payable to Ecology Division, DSIR.

Membership Survey - Preliminary Report No. 1

Based on returns received by 20 August 1987

In the 46 years of OSNZ this is the first time members have been asked to express their opinions specifically regarding the direction and activities of the Society. The RAOU held a similarly comprehensive survey a few years ago and many of the topics have been based on their ideas. It is interesting to note that *their* return rate was nearly half their members.

The results of our survey will appear in *OSNZ news* as details are analysed. Details of responses regarding regional matters will be collated and sent to RRs.

Already many useful suggestions have been made which could make life very exciting in coming years. We hope that the results, when published, will provoke further discussions and comment from members.

By 20 August, 4 weeks after most NZ members and received their forms, a creditable 40% had replied.

If you have not yet replied - PLEASE DO SO NOW. It would be a pity if the RAOU produced a better response rate than New Zealanders.

Preliminary Analyses

Percentage return of surveys, by region

Auckland	30
Bay of Plenty	76
Canterbury	44
Far North	22
Gisborne/Wairoa	66
Hawkes Bay	35
Marlborough	38
Manawatu/Wanganui	33
Northland	45
Nelson	62
Otago	48
South Auckland	33
Southland	50
Taranaki	29
Volcanic Plateau	33
Waikato	39
West Coast	40
Wellington	44
Total returns from all members	40%

Congratulations to Bay of Plenty, Gisborne/Wairoa and Nelson for leading the way and showing what can be done. The tail-enders have a little way to go before they catch up with the rest - come on Auckland!

Percentage returns by age and sex

Age	Male	Female	Total
60 +	15%	12%	27%
40 - 60	25%	10%	35%
20 - 40	24%	10%	34%
Under 20	3%	1%	4%
Total	67%	33%	100%

This suggests that on the basis of age the Society has an urgent need to recruit younger members. About one third of members are at least 55 years old. Currently only 20 members are listed in the under 20 age group but these members are also keen as over 50% of them have returned their survey forms.

In the next report we will look at how many members agreed to try and recruit new members during the next 2 years.

Where members live

Live in city	57%
Country Town	19%
Rural Area	22%

How did they first become interested in birds?

As members were able to score more than one reason, they are listed in order of total response.

1. Talking to an OSNZ member - 147
2. Personal research based on an interest in birds - 97
3. Other (see some examples listed below) - 56
4. Read an OSNZ publication - 45
5. Attended a field outing - 33
6. Attended a meeting - 26
7. Bird banding - 15
8. Through a newspaper - 2
9. Did not answer - 6

Some of the more prevalent or interesting other methods of gaining interest were: passed on from family; meeting founder members; self interest; through Forest & Bird; lectures given by OSNZ members to other groups; accidental meeting of active group on beach patrol; Richdale pamphlet; working in Natural History Museum, London; checking on unusual bird seen near home.

Probably the most telling comment about OSNZ was "not easy to join or find out about."

A number of members commented on the length of the survey and how long it took them to complete it. Another member noted that it had taken 45 minutes and this could seem to be a reasonable time unless a lot of extra comments were made. Is this really an unreasonable amount of time for a member to devote to helping support a personal interest? We think not, judging by the many constructive ideas and suggestions already made. It is not as though surveys like this are done on a regular basis. It would be nice if only one was needed in the next 50 years!

From some of the comments, members may have construed some of the questions to mean that a certain course of action was proposed. Many questions were included to promote thought, or discussion and may never be seriously considered by the Society. At least some of the objections received indicated such thought and have provided even better suggestions as an alternative.

All NZ libraries which have replied so far have agreed to alloting space for an OSNZ display. Also, the number of institutions wishing to purchase back number of *Notornis* will, in dollar terms, pay completely for the cost of the membership survey!

A final comment of considerable merit. Every new member helps stave off an increase in fees. How about a challenge? *1990 members by 1990.*

BRIAN D. BELL & CHRISTOPHER J.R. ROBERTSON

Lake Pouarua & the Ripia headwaters

On 29/1/87 we visited the headwaters of the Ripia Stream and Lake Pouarua (Lochinver Station). While the primary aim was a botanical survey some casual observations were made of the birdlife. There were large numbers of waterbirds on Lake Pouarua including Mallards, Canada Geese (at least 50 pairs), and Paradise Shelducks (perhaps as many as 1,000). Also seen were Pied Stilts, Spur-winged Plovers (at least 10), and a pair of Banded Dotterels. There is variable cover on the margins of the shallow lake, ranging from turf communities to stands of *Baumea huttonii* and raupo. A more detailed inspection would be well worthwhile.

Whiteheads and kakariki were observed in the red beech forest of the Ripia catchment, with Pipits in the remaining monoao shrublands.

W.B. SHAW & B.D. CLARKSON

Black-fronted Tern in the Far North

On 29/12/86, at the outlet of the Waimangu Swamp on Karikari Peninsula, I saw a small grey tern near 100 White-fronted Terns on the ocean beach. It was immediately recognisable as a Black-fronted Tern by its small size, grey plumage, white rump, and bright orange feet. It appeared to be an immature by virtue of its brown median coverts and flight feathers, and orange-brown bill. The bird was very tired and I was able to approach to within a metre. A strong onshore wind was blowing and probably had forced it onto the beach.

The only other record of this species as far north is " a puzzling tern, thought to be sub-adult of the species,. . ." seen at Rangiputo on 28/10/76 by A. T. Edgar and J.H. Seddon.

GEORGE WATOLA

Jaunt in the South Pacific

In August 1982 I was fortunate to spend 15 days on Western Samoa and Niue Island.

The purpose of the trip was to record on magnetic tape the songs and calls of birds on Niue. However, when arranging air travel I discovered that a stopover of 3 days would be made at Western Samoa.

I arrived at Apia on 22 August and the following morning had an opportunity to have a quick look around before travelling across the island to Kosena College. The following species were seen there - Red-vented Bulbul, Jungle Myna, Cardinal Honeyeater, and Wattled Honeyeater. A rather poor recording of the Jungle Myna was made.

On arrival at Kosena College, which is in rain forest about 35 km by road from Apia and at about 150m above sea level, the difference in temperature and humidity was most noticeable. On the trip across the island 12 Banded Rails were counted from the cab of the van in such areas as home gardens and thick rain forest.

Unfortunately a considerable amount of time was lost because of unseasonal wet weather. However, the number of recordings made was more than satisfactory. In a 3-hour burst one afternoon the following species were captured on tape - Banded Rail, Wattled Honeyeater, Red-vented Bulbul, Cardinal Honeyeater, Polynesian Triller, and a cicada. Species heard but not taped were: Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove - this was heard all day and every day and must be present in the hundreds; White-rumped Swiftlet - never more than 2 at a time, frequently seen hawking insects; Flat-billed Kingfisher - seen each day, with up to 3 in a group. Three species of waders were noted on the grass of the airfield but only Pacific Golden Plover could be identified positively at the range.

I arrived at Fonuakula airfield on Niue Island on 25/8/82 and my first recordings were made that evening of a yellow gecko which inhabits many of the houses and makes a quiet barking sound.

Only 25 species of birds are recorded from Niue and 13 of these are waders or seabirds, most of which are rare. I was fortunate to tape the songs and calls of 6 species from the western side of the island, near the airfield. These were Polynesian Triller, Purple-capped Fruit Dove, Polynesian Starling, White-rumped Swiftlet, and Pacific Golden Plover.

Species seen but not recorded were, Greater Frigate Bird - 2 seen late in the day when the wind was getting very strong; 1 Wandering Tattler feeding along the edge of a rock-clad swimming pool at the base of cliffs; and Barn Owl - seen twice, on both occasions in late afternoon.

Even though I had 10 days on Niue I found that taping was much more difficult than in Western Samoa, partly because of the difference in the fauna and partly because of restrictions on bush travel. However, these tapes of Niue Island birds are, as far as I know, the first to be made. First generation copies of these have been made and deposited in the National Sound Archive, London, England and with Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. I hold the original recordings, along with the New Zealand field recordings made since 1969, when the collection was begun.

Recording bird song is not without its share of trials and tribulations. While attempting to tape the calls of Pacific Golden Plover on the airfield at Niue I was almost arrested by the air traffic controller for obstructing the main runway. On a day when no aircraft movements were scheduled, the nearest being some 1,300 km away, I walked the length of the main runway along the centre line, slowly approaching the birds. Using a parabolic reflector I got the calls required plus some unconventional sounds with a broad Irish accent that came from a rather irate NZ MOT officer. The field tape needed considerable editing but was worth the risk and effort made in obtaining it.

I wish to thank David and Anna Gutenbeil of Alofi Niue for their hospitality during my stay and officers of the SDA church for other help.
L.B. McPHERSON

Whitehead-Brown Creeper

While searching for Yellowheads on Mt Stokes, Marlborough Sounds, in late April 1987, I saw an unusual bird.

At that time of year the best method to sight Yellowheads is to locate a mixed flock of bush birds and check each bird. Most flocks were dominated by Brown Creepers, although we were successful in seeing 2 Yellowheads in the first flock located.

In the second flock there was an odd bird. At first I thought it was a Whitehead and being a North Islander, I didn't think much about it. Then I suddenly realised that it should not be in the Marlborough Sounds and perhaps it was a bird blown over from Kapiti Island. However, on closer inspection the bird was properly identified as a Brown Creeper which had a distinctive white cap plus a little white under the eyes and near the base of the bill. The bill was also very pale.

As is typical of bush birds the flock moved on and so those were all the details we were able to record.
W.F. CASH

Waterfowl group funded

The national waterfowl and wetland conservation group Ducks Unlimited has recieved a grant of $45,000 from the Government.

The grant was made under the Tourist and Publicity Department's Community and Public Sector Grants Scheme and is to assist Ducks Unlimited with its work at the Sinclair Wetlands, near Dunedin, where a major national tourist attraction is being established.

Work carried out at the wetlands is very similar to Sir Peter Scott's efforts at the Wildfowl Trust in the U.K. In as much as, public education facilities, research facilities, visitors accommodation, managers residence, walkways, hides overlooking the wild areas, and picnic facilities are being constructed. An area close to the main building will house a captive display of all ducks, geese and swans present in New Zealand.

The 310 ha Sinclair Wetlands are recognised as the best privately owned wetlands in New Zealand and were gifted to Ducks Unlimited 2 years ago by Horrie Sinclair, who had preserved the wetlands in their natural state for over 25 years. The wetlands support 68 species of wildlife, together with a variety of rare plants.
NEIL HAYES

Westland Black Petrel research notes, 10-29/4/87

The most important single discovery made during this trip was that the population on the study colony seems to have stabilised, and shows no increase from 1985 or 1986. This preliminary conclusion was reached from cumulative capture-recapture analysis of banded birds. It is the first time since capture - recapture analysis began in 1972 that no annual increase has been shown. There is also good evidence that the population has been increasing since before then - from 1955 at least, at an average rate of about 5%.

The reason for the slow-down in population increase is probably reduced chick production and survivorship since 1979, reflecting the reduction of trawling and, possibly, a consequent increase in the mortality rate of juveniles and adult females. For instance, the recapture rate of chicks banded in 1980 appears lower that for previous years.

Forty-three birds banded as chicks in earlier years were recovered in April. Of these, only 3 were females, which suggests that female survival during their first 5-10 years is much less than for males. On the colony, adult males outnumber females by more than 2:1, even allowing for the differential catch rates of females caused by behavioural differences. Perhaps even more significantly, the survival rate of adult females is much less than for adult males. More that 12 times as many males than females survive today from the study pairs selected in 1976 and 1977.

The cause of this differential mortality is thought to be competition between males and females for food at sea. With the numbers of males inflated by trawling and its impacts, the lighter weight females may be at an increasing disadvantage as trawl fish now become less available and males remain more numerous.

Survival of adult males continues to be high, and at least 35% of the adult males which I banded on the study colony in 1970 are still alive. These birds must now exceed 25 years in age, as they were banded as 'adults' (7 years plus). Average annual survival of adult males is thus about 96%, which is not exceptional for petrels.

The first 8 birds banded as chicks in 1981 were recovered this year, after 6 years. Minimum age of first return to the colony has been 5 years, thus again this slight increase may indicate harder conditions at sea.

Four study burrows contain known-age birds (banded as chicks). In one case, a known-age pair has dug a new burrow near their natal burrow.

The total number of birds banded is now 2,700, and over 500 of these were banded as chicks. Of this total 2,100 were banded on the study colony.
J.A. BARTLE

Gannet mange

Heidi Medway found a dead Gannet near Cape Egmont on 7/1/86. It was a female with regressed ovaries and was emaciated as it weighed only 1.3 kg. As I started to skin the bird the skin fell away from the pectoral muscles in an abnormal manner. Hundreds of *Neottialges* nymphal mites had infected every feather tract on the bird but were densest under the skin of the breast.

Neottialges mites are probably attracted to fat deposits in the feather tracts, where they dine and take advantage of the good blood supply for their own oxygen uptake and waste removal.
JOHN CLARK

Encounter with an Arctic Skua

On the morning of 5/1/87 I was birdwatching at the Motueka Rivermouth at low tide when I saw an Arctic Skua flying over mudflats about 1 km from the sea.

My attention was first brought to the skua when a flock of 248 Turnstones that I was watching suddenly flew up and circled the area at a height of about 50 m. Moments later I noticed a dark-phase Arctic Skua pursuing a Black-billed Gull 200 m upstream from the rivermouth. The skua made several determined attacks on the gull, obviously after the small fish which the gull carried in its bill. In an effort to escape, the gull landed with the skua at its back. A struggle lasting half a minute followed, after which the skua lost interest and gave up. Then it noticed that I was watching nearby and flew toward me at a height of about 1 m. It pulled up 4 to 5 m away and buzzed me several times before flying to the water's edge, where it was mobbed by 13 Black-fronted Terns.

The skua then set off on a fast, low-level flight, weaving through groups of feeding waders, ducks and gulls. It landed briefly amongst a flock of unconcerned oystercatchers to redress its plumage and then flew over the mudflats toward Rikwaka Wharf. Small flocks of godwits, Knots, and Turnstones flew about in a panic but native species, excluding the terns, remained unperturbed.

Next the skua chased a flock of 20 Knots over the Riwaka Sands, and at times was over a kilometre from the shore. The bird flew over Outer Island and was last seen heading towards Kaiteriteri.

The whole encounter lasted about 10 minutes and is noteworthy because the skua was operating up the Motueka River when first seen, landed amongst roosting oystercatchers, and was flying above mudlats a great distance from water.

Other birds present at the Motueka Estuary during January included 4787 SIPO, 72 Variable Oystercatchers, 2640 Bar-tailed Godwits, 138 Lesser Knots, 370 Turnstones, 276 Pied Stilts, 172 Banded Dotterels, 300 Spur-winged Plovers, and 2 White Herons.

ANDREW CROSSLAND

Bird Rescue

Bird Rescue is the Auckland-based organisation that accepts all injured, sick or orphaned birds into its hospital centres for first aid treatment and care. The aim is to release the birds back into the wild as soon as possible after treatment.

Bird Rescue has no funding and all hospital centre operators are voluntary. The organisation exists because of the goodwill of the general public. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to make finances stretch to meet running costs, and so Bird Rescure is seeking the help of members of the Ornithological Society.

Members can help in two ways. Firstly, please become a member of Bird Rescue. Membership forms are available from P.O. Box 3913, Auckland. By doing so we will be able to expand and upgrade our facilities to cater for the increasing number of birds which come into our care - an estimated 3000 birds this year. Secondly, consider fostering some of the young birds that will be brought to Bird Rescue this spring. This will help to spread the load experienced by Bird Rescue centres. We can supply instructions and diet sheets for all young birds.

Please help Bird Rescue to continue helping wild birds.

JANET CHERITON

Ornithological miscellany

For me, the old saying "one man's meat is another man's poison" has taken a new meaning, it should now be "one man's litter is another bird's nest'.

One day while visiting Whangarei Base Hospital I casually glanced at a large ball of straw lying on the ground. It looked like the nest of a House Sparrow and within it was a vast collection of multifarious litter. I put the nest in my pocket and headed home to dissect it.

The following is what I found: 69 feathers, mainly chicken but including magpie (2), sparrow (3), Fantail, and rosella; 53 pieces of clear cellophane cigarette wrappers; 19 cigarette filter-tips; 7 cellophane straw containers; 2 pieces of toilet paper; 1 raffle ticket (no. 99 green diamond); 1 cinema ticket; 1 piece of hospital board pay-sheet; 1 piece of string; 15 pieces of sweet-wrapping; 1 piece of chewing gum wrapping; 19 assorted pieces of paper/plastic/cellophane; 3 pieces of silver paper; 8 assorted pieces of cotton; 1 cigarette paper; 1 lump of horse hair; 7 strands of human hair; 1 piece of memo paper ("ring Julie"); 12 assorted pieces of unrecognisable rubbish. A total of 222 items in one sparrow's nest. The rest of the nest comprised dried leaves, grass, toetoe, seeds, hair and dock.

It was clear to me that the ubiquitous NZ corner dairy was obviously a great hunting ground of sparrows for nesting material, with the local tobacco industry making a sizeable contribution. Perhaps this accounts for the rather wheezy sound of the New Zealand's unoffical rubbish collectors.

G. N. BRACKENBURY

Annual winter count of Crested Grebes and Scaup in Canterbury

The annual mid-winter count of Southern Crested Grebes and NZ Scaup was held in Canterbury in mid-July. 33 OSNZ members and DOC staff visited 50 lakes and lagoons throughout the region and counted a total of 176 Crested Grebes and 4639 Scaup (Table 1). Bill Cash recorded a further 9 grebes on the Kaikoura Lakes (Rotorua and Rotoiti). Numbers of other wetland species were also counted (Table 2).

The number of Crested Grebes was the highest recorded in Canterbury since winter counts began in 1981, and was only 19 birds short of the total recorded for most of the lakes in the South Island in 1980. It appears that numbers in Canterbury have increased from about 128 in 1980 to over 170. This increase reflects a build-up in numbers at Lakes Alexandrina/MacGregor over the last few years. Counts from last summer show that about 100 adults were present around Alexandrina, compared with about 40 in 1980. Grebe numbers on other lake systems have increased only slightly since 1980 and appear to have been more static over the last few years.

Of note this winter was the occurrence of 20 grebes on Lake Forsyth, adjacent to Lake Ellesmere, on the Canterbury coast. This is the first time on record that a large concentration of Crested Grebes has been found on a lowland coastal lake in Canterbury. While stragglers have been recorded on coastal lakes previously (Lake Ellesmere, Lake Forsyth, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Brooklands Lagoon) during hard winters, these have usually been of single birds. The appearance of such a large number (3rd highest total for any lake) during a winter when none of the high country lakes was frozen is strange.

Table 1 - Winter counts of Southern Crested Grebes and NZ Scaup in Canterbury.

Group	No. lakes checked	No. grebes	No. scaup
North Canterbury	3	3	0
Sumner	6	6	163
Pearson	7	11	336
Coleridge	7	24	9
Ashburton	9	46	2113
Alexandrina	2	63	1605
MacKenzie Basin	4	2	226
Lowland Canterbury	12	21	187
Totals	50	176	4639

It appears that the Forsyth birds may have come from Lake Alexandrina. Numbers there had dropped to 63 from the summer high, perhaps indicating that the carrying capacity of the Alexandrina Lakes has been reached and excess birds must move elsewhere. Grebe numbers on the other lake systems were comparable to those expected in a year when no freezing has occurred.

NZ Scaup numbers were also higher this winter compared with the 3871 in 1985 and 3476 in 1986. Increases have occurred on the Sumner, Ashburton, and Alexandrina groups, and a more thorough survey of the MacKenzie Basin was carried out than previously. Thus Canterbury may support about 5000 NZ Scaup. How many Scaup occur in other regions?

Table 2 - Winter counts at high country lakes in Canterbury, July 1987

Group	Sumner	Pearson	Coleridge	Ashburton	Alexandrina	Total
Crested Grebe	6	11	24	46	63	150
Black Shag	21	3	8	10	4	46
Little Shag	11	34	22	110	23	200
White-faced Heron	1	1	2	7	0	11
Bittern	0	0	0	1	0	1
Black Swan	15	77	38	477	74	681
Canada Goose	555	235	207	1301	186	2484
Paradise Shelduck	152	12	47	193	0	404
Mallard	70	127	85	168	114	564
Grey Duck	6	26	31	28	0	91
NZ Shoveler	0	5	0	7	7	19
Grey Teal	0	0	0	52	8	64
NZ Scaup	163	326	9	2113	1605	4216
Duck spp.	0	60	11	167	0	238
Australian Coot	0	0	0	134	0	134
Black-backed Gull	7	2	7	38	0	54
Black-billed Gull	0	0	1	24	0	25
Pied Oystercatcher	2	0	1	5	0	8
Spur-winged Plover	46	0	12	68	0	126
Pied Stilt	0	0	0	2	0	2
Black-f.Tern	0	0	0	3	0	3
Pukeko	1	0	0	3	0	4
Totals	1056	919	509	4957	2084	9525

Thanks to the members and friends who participated in the survey:

J. Ackerley, L. Adams, J. Andrews, A. Bray, B. Cash, P. Cook, T. Croos, G. Crump, P. Dilks, D. Geddes, I. Glassey, A. Grant, D. Goodale, E. Kennedy, M. & R. Lane, P. Langlands, P. McCelland, N. Mclean, R. Maloney, D. & L. Murray, R. Nilsson, C. Pearson, C. Read, B. Seddon, N. & H. Sinclair, M. Stoker, S. Walker, G. Watola, J. Whitty, D. Wilkins.

COLIN O'DONNELL

Substantial Assistance for Wetlands Conservation Group

The waterfowl and wetlands national conservation group Ducks Unlimited has received a substantial contribution towards its work at the Sinclair Wetlands, near Dunedin.

Under its national subsidy scheme the QEII National Trust has contributed $50 000 towards the construction of research facilities, public education facilities, managers residence, visitors accomodation, walkways to hides overlooking the wild areas, and picnic facilities. All of which are currently under construction. A ponding area close to the main building is also being constructed and this facility will house the largest captive waterfowl collection ever assembled in New Zealand.

To protect the wetlands in perpetuity a QEII National Trust Open Space Covenant has been placed over the 310 hectares of wetland. This main area of wetlands, together with a further 140 hectares of adjacent wetlands being leased by Ducks Unlimited, will be managed by a joint Ducks Unlimited and National Trust Committee. The Otago Acclimatisation Society will be represented on the committee, as well as the Department of Conservation. Ducks Unlimited and the National Trust have already produced a comprehensive management plan for the total 450 hectares of wetlands and the 2 organisations are confident that the areas, which supports nearly 70 species of wildlife and is ranked amongst the world's best wetlands, will become New Zealand's major environmental attraction.

NEIL HAYES

Regional Roundup

Auckland: Recent meetings have featured Dick Veitch on the Department on Conservation, Ray Pierce on studies of bird predators, and Graeme Taylor with slides of Campbell Island. The main focus of winter field work has been the shorebirds and good weather in June allowed the harbour counts to be accomplished in the space of a few days while the birds were in settled roosts. 23 members took part in the Auckland counts - the region's share of the national tally being 17 100 waders of 17 species.

The June issue of *Tara* (No. 46) contained 20 pages of lists, reports, tables from surveys, beach patrols etc and some splendid accounts of members' birdwatching. Also included was a tribute to Patricia Fooks, a dear friend of many OSNZ members, who died on 28 April. (Michael Taylor)

South Auckland: At Queens Birthday Weekend 13 members and an overseas visitor were based at Waihi Beach, where we were woken by Bellbirds singing in the coastal banksias. Saturday (30/5) was spent surveying the Otahu, Whangamata and Opoutere Estuaries. Species seen included 82 Variable Oystercatchers, including 51 at Opoutere where we were also pleased to see 7 NZ Dotterels, 65 Paradise Shelducks, 1 Reef Heron, 1 Banded Rail and 5 Fernbirds. On Sunday Beth Brown took us to the Golden Cross/Maratoto Summit, somewhat altered by new mining roads, where we had almost immediate response to locally taped Kokako calls. Two birds sang for 20 minutes and then stayed together, in full view of our party. A third bird was heard several times. Returning via Miranda we noted 24 Spur-winged Plovers at Mackaytown, and 60 Cattle Egrets at Piako.

Sightings from around the region include a Royal Spoonbill which returned to its roost near the wharf at Coromandel early in May; 3 Canada Geese at Bottletop Bay on 8/3 and 6 on Lake Pokorua on 1/6. A Galah was still present at Mataitai on 29/5 and there are reliable reports of 4 last winter. (Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato: Cattle Egret numbers are building up in the region : as early as 30/3 6 were seen on the north bank of the Mokau River. At Rototuna 3 were seen on 30/4 and by 18/7 there were 11. A dead Cattle Egret was picked up during a patrol of Ruapuke Beach on 24/5. At Rangiriri on 7/6 there were 160, increasing to about 380 by 9/7 and 400 by 16/7. On 9/5 at Lake Ngaroto 21 were present and by 11/6 there were 34. In addition to the egrets, there were 6 Dabchicks at L. Ngaroto on 11/6, these are not seen there often.

During the winter wader count at Kawhia Harbour on 28/6 visitor Richard Lowe spotted a Hudsonian Godwit flying with Bar-tailed Godwits. Several members were able to get good views of the mostly dark underwing and small white wingbar. On the same day 4 Black Stilts and 9 hybrid stilts were counted. Richard noted the banded hybrid that had been seen at Kawhia earlier in the season: it had been banded at the lower Ahuriri River and was last seen there on 21/1.

In and around Hamilton, a Song Thrush was on eggs by 6/6, 3 NZ Pigeons were in the suburbs in May, and a Caspian Tern seen first on 26/6 is still to be found on Hamilton Lake. (Stella Rowe & Adrian Plant)

Gisborne/Wairoa: Interesting sightings made during the winter include the following. Dachicks - the only coastal sighting was of 5 at Whakaki on 1/6. Inland from Wairoa there were 3 on a pond alongside the Ruapapa Road on 8/6 and 2 on the lake at Tuai on 7/7. Also present on the Tuai Lake were 94 Black Swans and 52 Australian Coots.

The white Variable Oystercatcher is still at Tolaga Bay, and roosts with other oystercatchers at the Uawa Estuary at high tide.

Little Black Shag - there were two groups at the Wairoa River Estuary on 14/6. One group of 27 was drying out on a mudbank, while another group of 42 was feeding in a very shallow backwater. They were herding small fish in a few cms of water in which Black-backed Gulls were able to stand. The gulls were picking up small fish, while the shags swam among them. I have not seen them operating in such shallow water before and was amazed at the speed they swam in water where they could only just get their head under.

Two White Herons were at Whakaki in early August, and a Royal Spoonbill was at Nuhaka in May.

On 1/8 I saw a Black-fronted Dotterel in a small backwater of the Wairoa Estuary. This is only my second sighting of this species in the district, the other was on 1/11/73 in exactly the same spot. They are now established on the lower Mohaka River, only 20 km west of here, where a count of 24 birds was made on 9/11/86. (Geoff. Foreman)

Hawkes Bay: On 26/4, 19 members spent the day at Lake Tutira. Although it was warm and sunny a strong wind made the lake surface choppy but 60 NZ Scaup did not seem to mind. Mallards, Black Swans and Dabchicks favoured sheltered bays. A well spread group of about 200 Australian Coots occupied another part of the lake.

Mohi Bush was the destination of 18 members on 16/5. The party split into 3 in order to cover different areas and obtain a count of Rifleman. The species list included 19 Rifleman, 6 NZ Pigeons, 8 Tuis, plus Fantails, Grey Warblers, Silvereyes, Kingfisher, Harrier, Yellowhammer, and introduced finches. Two Sulphur-crested Cockatoos flew towards Waimarama, they were clearly seen and their calls heard from a distance.

The winter wader count was successfully completed by 25 members on 11/7. Some of the more notable species were 16 Royal Spoonbills, White Heron, Reef Heron, Asiatic Whimbrel, Mongolian Dotterel, 129 Black-fronted Dotterels, 30 Black-fronted Terns, a Gull-billed Tern, 192 Spur-winged Plovers, 60 Bar-tailed Godwits, and 37 Spotted Shags. (Kathleen Todd)

Manawatu/Wanganui: Our Cattle Egrets update includes 250 birds at Whirokino on 15/6 (Walter Jackson), and 28/6 (R. Slack);

60 at Lake Horowhenua on 15/6 (W. Jackson), and 25 at Whangaehu on 3/7 (Philip Battley). Other flocks of Cattle Egrets have been reported from the region e.g. 20 at Woodville on 14/6 (W. Jackson), and we hope to have a more complete picture by August.

Another major effort by Walter Jackson to survey Lake Horowhenua by boat on 23/6 produced the following impressive list: 891 Black Swans, 1742 Mallards, 480 Shovelers, 20 Paradise Shelducks, 10 Grey Teal, 137 Dabchicks, 35 Black-billed Gulls, 82 Little Black Shags, 28 Little Shags, 27 Black Shags, 4 White-faced Herons, 37 Pied Stilts, 51 Pukekos and 8 Harriers. The count of 137 Dabchicks stands out and the waterfowl totals confirm the lake as the best in the region for waterfowl.

Other species reported recently include 38 Royal Spoonbills at the Manawatu Estuary on 28/6 (Jim Moore), this is 10-15 birds higher than noted in the past few years. A NZ Falcon seen at the Manawatu Estuary on 28/6 by Rob Gillian Guest and Lindsay Davies was pursued by 40+ Spur-winged Plovers until it took cover in Waitarere Forest. 30+ Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were seen west of Hunterville on 24/5 (Rob Guest), and 4 were seen 2 km south of Pahiatua on 16/6 (D. Jackson). A Glossy Ibis was at the Manawatu Estuary for about an hour on 5/7. (Lindsay Davies)

Wellington: A bird count was made along the Wellington walkway Orongorongo/5 Mile track on 21/6. In addition, Tony Beauchamp counted birds along Cattle Ridge at the same time. Results for the 2 tracks combined were: 1 NZ Falcon, 3 NZ Pigeons, 1 Kingfisher, 3 Welcome Swallows, 25 Fantails, 5 Pied Tits, 18 Whiteheads, 16 Grey Warblers, 158 Silvereyes, 22 Goldfinches, 7 Chaffinches, 3 Magpies, 1 Morepork, 1 Harrier, and 2 Paradise Shelducks.

In July we intend to start a bird counting programme on Mana Island. This will take the same format as that completed on Kapiti Island in 1976-78 and 1983-85. It is hoped that the lines will be installed by the time of the first count. The programme will include 5-minute, walk, and coastal counts and beach patrols. The information will provide an index of species composition and density changes as revegetation of the island occurs.

A Crested Tern was seen at Mana Island during the weekend of 27-28/6. (Russell Thomas)

Nelson: Our visits to Motueka Sandspit have been blessed with good weather, although we have mostly had to wade through the channel. There have been no NZ Dotterels but a skua chasing a tern, and unidentified tern has been seen on 2 occasions. On our last visit there were some 200 Black shags and 50 Black-fronted Terns.

During Easter there was a Royal Spoonbill in Nelson Haven and another 17 at the Waimea Estuary. By May there were 18 spoonbills at Motueka. (Jenny Hawkins)

West Coast: On 20/4 I watched a bird for a few seconds as it flew towards me, only to turn away and disappear behind some willows. All the time it was calling loudly. However, on 7/5 at the Twelve Mile Bluff I was alerted by the same call and was able to watch the bird for about 10 minutes in good light as it circled and swooped. Later I identified if as a Spine-tailed Swift, and think this will be the 4th record for Westland/Buller.

On 10/6 in Greymouth I heard a noise like someone filing metal and saw 2 birds flying along the top of a nearby ridge. One of the birds was obviously a Harrier and binoculars showed the other to be a NZ Falcon. The Falcon was chasing the Harrier. The latter are frequently seen on the ridge but this is the first time I have seen a falcon in the area. (Stewart Lauder)

Canterbury: Since the previous newsletter there has been a pleasing increase in the number of members attending our monthly meetings. In June Ron Nilsson gave an interesting talk about our endangered birds and it was particularly pleasing to hear about the latest developments of finding South Island Kokako on Stewart Island. In July Peter Carey treated us to a taste of life on the Open Bay Islands. While in August Colin Miskelly reviewed research undertaken at the Snares Islands during the past 2 years, with details of the breeding system of Snares Island Snipe.

It has been an interesting winter in Canterbury. A white-phase Reef Heron was reported at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary during May by Andrew Crossland. With White Herons, a Little Egret, 30 Royal Spoonbills, and the occasional Cattle Egret also at the estuary there was no shortage of white egret-type birds to compare it with. On 21/6 Richard Maloney and George Watola found a Grey Phalarope at Lake Ki-Wainono and then there was the count of Crested Grebes and NZ Scaup (reports of these are elsewhere in this issue). In late July and early August we had a small but interesting wreck of prions. Peter Langlands and Andrew Crossland first reported unusual numbers of prions on the beach between Brooklands Lagoon and Brighton Spit and this prompted several other patrols to be made. The wreck comprised mainly Fairy Prions with a few Thin-billed Prions and the odd Blue Petrel and Kerguelen Petrel. However, the most interesting find was 10 Fulmar Prions, the national annual total of this species is usually only 5.

In August Richard Holdaway organised a successful mist-netting operation at a local seed store which resulted in the capture of 92 Greenfinches and 2 House Sparrows. The birds were measured, weighed and banded before being released. This is a particularly useful way to train prospective bird banders in the art of removing birds from a mist net and the correct way to measure, handle and band them. (Paul Sagar)

Otago: George Grant reports a Marsh Crake seen near Outram on 20/4. Mr & Mrs Coleman had a late (or early) nest of Spur-winged Plover with 2 eggs on 13/4 - the chicks hatched on 12/5. On 5/5 I saw a Glossy Ibis at the Contour Channel Bridge No.1, near Berwick. It stayed for 4 days. Tony Hocken reports a Little Egret at Karitane in May and Alison Nevill saw one near Berwick on 4/6

Tony Hocken saw a Reef Heron at Blueskin Bay on 16/6 and Lloyd Esler saw one at Warrington on 21/6. Mary Matheson reports 53 Cattle Egrets at Telford, with another 13 at Paretai in late June. There were 57 Cattle Egrets at Berwick on 31/7. Kim Morrison saw 6 Banded Dotterels at Kaikorai Estuary on 21/4. As far as I know this is the first report of them from that area. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: During the last week of January, coastal Southland experienced strong to gale force westerlies for several days. Whilst at Oreti Beach on 26/1 we discovered the body of a Shy Mollymawk, which was fairly fresh and probably had only been dead for a day or two. The head was white, which suggests that the specimen was a male, and the bill was pale greyish-green with a yellow tip.

On 22/4 I spotted a White Heron feeding along edge of the Waihopai River at low tide. A photograph of this bird subsequently appeared in the *Southland Times*. (Michael Criglington)

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