

No.83

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Note: Deadline for the September issue will be 10th August.

Edited by TONY CROCKER

118 Cones Road, Ashley RD2 Rangiora.

Phone: 03-313 4995, Fax: 03-364 9648

Email: crockert@omega.chchp.ac.nz

for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

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

OSNZ News

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Vintage Year for Taiko

The Chatham Island Taiko, rarest seabird in the world and competing with Kakapo as New Zealand's most endangered endemic bird, has had its most successful breeding season for uncountable decades. From only four eggs (one per breeding pair) laid last November, four chicks were raised and flew out into the Pacific between 12 and 16 May, from their burrows 5 kms inland in the rugged bush of southwest Chatham Island.

The success achieved this breeding season was due to the daily attention of DoC-employed minder Rex Williams and supervisor Paul Johnstone in trapping Weka and poisoning rats around the burrows. Identification of Weka, as well as rats, as a threat to Taiko chicks, unguarded in their two to four metre long burrows from three days old, was a major breakthrough in the battle to save this beautiful petrel.

Even the chicks' nocturnal departure to sea was found to be more hazardous than realised, thanks to little 5 g. transmitters taped on their tails just beforehand. One chick was rescued thrice from the bush after it crashed on take-off; put back twice in its burrow, it was finally taken to the coast and released at night. Another spent a day holed up away from its burrow before making it to the sea. In the past, before regular trapping of predators since 1987, such downed Taiko would have been a meal for feral cats. Predator numbers around the burrows, and between them and the bush edge, are now probably at their lowest level this century. Much of this area is within a large reserve donated by the Tuanui family, who continue as strong supporters of Taiko conservation.

The historic colonies of Taiko, when it was the most abundant bird on Chatham Island, before Moriori arrived, were close to the coast. Then the chicks' departure was easy, but now they have to climb trees and need wind to assist take-off. The calm weather this autumn

delayed their departures and had DoC staff praying for wind - ironic for the Chathams where the wind rarely stops.

Since the first finding of burrows in 1987, only one breeding pair reared a chick each year from 1988 to 1992. In 1993 two were reared, and three in 1995, but none in 1994 or 1996. The challenge for DoC in the coming 1997-98 season is to break the good-bad yearly cycle.

Like the Phoenix arising from the ashes (the Taiko was once considered to be a form of the Phoenix Petrel of the central Pacific), this success in 1997 follows the triple disasters of 1996: the deaths of two volunteers (Gavin Woodward, Raewyn Smith) who were helping to search for more burrows; the death of the male Taiko of the best breeding pair; and the failure of all six eggs to produce fledglings. These latest four chicks will greatly help to save the species, but dedicated efforts will need to continue.

MIKE IMBER

More Success for Fluttering Shearwater Transfer

Further to our item in the December 1996 *OSNZ News*, we can report that on Maud Island the pair of Fluttering Shearwaters transferred to the island by OSNZ members as chicks have successfully fledged their own chick. This successful breeding attempt is the first time that a procellariiform species has been moved to a site, the transferred chicks have been artificially fed until fledging, and adult birds have returned to the new (artificial) colony and bred successfully.

The pair, one bird from the first year of transfer, and its mate from the third year, raised the chick through to fledging without any human intervention. This pair should remain together throughout their

breeding life. The identities of the second pair (which laid the egg which was found broken - see *OSNZ News* 81) remain unknown, but this pair should attempt to breed next year also. Another five birds have been caught ashore at the colony, and several more birds have been heard flying over the colony at night but have not been caught. With these two pairs, and returning birds, along with any further birds returning from the last two years of transfers, a small colony will develop and expand.

The successful development of this transfer technique offers opportunities for several endangered seabird conservation projects in New Zealand (such as Chatham Island Petrel and Taiko) and elsewhere in the world.

LOUISE & MIKE BELL

Robert Falla Memorial Award

There are two basic components to this prestigious award. 1. valuable contributions to the study of birds in the New Zealand region AND 2. sustained service to the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Nominees must satisfy both criteria. There have been twelve previous recipients of the award since it was established in 1980.

The R.A. Falla Memorial Award of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand for 1997 was made to:

David Edgar Crockett

David joined the Society in 1950 as a youngster while still at school. Early contact with bird study and ornithologists was a significant factor in his developing interest in natural history, which has expanded through a lifetime's professional career as an educator in the broad field of nature study and science.



David Crockett after presentation of the 1996/97 Falla Award.

Photo: Jean Hawken

In the relatively short life of the Society, we have seen how ornithology and the study of birds has developed into a distinctive compartment of the science of Natural History. The professional ornithologist is still a relatively rare animal on the landscape (some would say critically endangered) but David represents a continuing example of what used to be known as a naturalist - those with a broad and enquiring interest in the world about us. Throughout a lifetime career as an educator and science advisor, originally in Wanganui and for the past 25 years in the north, he has brought his enthusiasm to many pupils, both in the field and in the classroom.

His service to the Society has been long, continuous and wide-ranging, including Nest Record Scheme Convenor (1969-85), Regional Representative of the Society for Northland (1972-96), as a Council member (1977-85) and as a Vice-President since 1985. In the course of this distinguished career of voluntary service, he has facilitated and fostered the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds.

Very early in his ornithological life (1952), he developed an interest in some mysterious bird bones from Moriori middens in the Chatham Islands stored in the Canterbury Museum which he was helping to classify. This early interest developed into a quest, through anecdotal and historic data, to what has subsequently become known and acknowledged as the Taiko (Magenta Petrel), but which then seemed to be either extinct or its breeding place unknown.

In 1969 he led his first exploration to the Chatham Islands and heard about unusual bird calls over the SW Chathams. This was to start a series of expeditions over the next 25 years in search of the elusive quarry. Possible sightings in 1972 and onwards fuelled the enthusiasm of David and a growing number of

participatory volunteers, but it was not until 1978 that one was captured to enable the confirmation of the rediscovery of *Pterodroma magentae*. It was obviously very rare.

The next ten years were spent trying to find where they might breed among the tangled bush of the southern Chathams. Since 1987, the use of radio tracking (developed with the NZ Wildlife Service and DoC) has enabled this to be achieved. Now there is an extensive programme operating under the direction of the Department of Conservation to manage the protection and recovery of the species.

Ornithology is often a very private and secretive obsession. David has managed to sustain this obsession very publicly, often in the face of public scepticism.

It is appropriate that the Society should recognise David Crockett, who not only searched for the definitive proof to validate his ornithological theories, but, through his service and sharing, has managed to enthuse and motivate others along the way.

C.J.R. Robertson
President

Sale - Back Numbers of *Notornis*

Council has decided to reduce the number of back issues of *Notornis* held in stock. This is an opportunity for any member or institution to obtain a complete set of *Notornis* at a bargain price which is unlikely to be repeated. Members may still continue to obtain single or small groups of issues at the normal rates

advertised from time to time. This offer is only for ALL the issues contained within the packages listed below and includes postage and GST. Orders from OVERSEAS should pay in US dollars, or provide details for payment by Visa in US dollars.

Offer 1 - *Notornis* and *NZ Bird Notes*, and annual indexes, from Volume 1 to Volume 32 inclusive (1939-1985) - \$165.00.

Offer 2 - complete set of *Notornis* and *NZ Bird Notes* and annual indexes from Volume 1 to Volume 43 inclusive (1939-1996) - \$375.00.

OFFER CLOSES 20 SEPTEMBER 1997 FOR NZ RESIDENTS AND 20 OCTOBER 1997 FOR OVERSEAS RESIDENTS. Goods will be dispatched by surface post after these dates.

Orders and payment should be sent to: OSNZ Publications Offer, P.O. Box 316, Drury, Auckland.



From the President's Desk

The return from the wilds of the Chatham Islands does not seem to have stopped my wanderings, so the collection this time will be more of a series of transient parcels.

The advances of technology related to bird study are becoming quite impressive. Satellite tracking of albatrosses in New Zealand waters this summer has been extensive. With assistance from Australian, British and French interests, our researchers have been gaining extraordinary new coverage of the travels of Northern and Southern Royals and Antipodean Wandering Albatrosses, NZ Black-browed, Grey-headed, Southern Buller's and Chatham Mollymawks. Using the ARGOS weather satellite, which has a number of channels devoted to animal tracking, our knowledge of albatrosses world-wide has made some quantum leaps during the past few years. Though very expensive, this technology has now started to clear up some of the mysteries about the 80% of their lives spent over the oceans and away from the breeding islands. Both distance and speed records have been set, which I am sure will make interesting reading when they are published.

The mainland Northern Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head has been in the news again, firstly for another probable stoat attack on young chicks, and then further unexplained mortality of adults (last seen in 1989), at the same time as a die-off of Yellow-eyed Penguins on the Otago Peninsula. This is not the first time for any of these events. Introduced mammalian predators (cats, ferrets and stoats) are a continuing problem to all our birds where they occur, and the problems of maintaining a predator-free "mainland island" is a continuing struggle. This type of struggle has now extended into bush areas as well, with DoC developing these "islands" throughout the country. Innovative predator control methods will be needed to restore the missing birdlife.

The unexplained die-offs are more of a problem however, and may be symptomatic of changes in the marine environment producing biotoxins, or as yet unfound viruses or unexplained diseases related to avian pox or malaras. All things possible are being investigated - so far without conclusive result. What is clear is that this type of event seems to be occurring with some sort of periodic regularity during the past 15-20 years. Whether it is a natural phenomenon or a sign of environmental or species stress remains to be demonstrated.

However other news at Taiaroa Head is more positive and back to the technological theme. The Otago Peninsula Trust has been developing the concept of on-line video viewing from within the albatross colony, and trials with one camera are in progress at the moment. It has been evident for a numbers of years that there has been a trend for birds to choose to breed out of sight of visitors both accessing the observatory and in the observatory itself. While tests to modify the observatory building, in order to solve the primary problem, are almost completed, there are still large parts of the colony which are still not on public view, except from sea-based tours by boat.

The steep terrain of the headland also prevents good viewing from any possible new or additional observatory. Further, there are times of the year when access to the present observatory is restricted (during the egg laying period) or when there are too many tourists for its capacity. The long-term aim is to have on-line video viewing at the reception and display area (away from the breeding areas), with some cameras being able to be remotely controlled (pan, tilt and zoom) from the viewing screen location, with visitors able to take a print of what they are seeing. This should be the ultimate in non-disturbing eco-tourism, and is probably a world first. The trial camera has already produced some remarkable close-up viewing of chick feeding and the inquisitive behaviour of the chick investigating its surroundings, including the camera housing.

A visit to Canterbury enabled some field work with the local OSNZers, starting with a brief visit to the muds of the Ashley rivermouth and good views of some visiting (unbanded) Royal Spoonbills. They are starting to become a spectacular part of our national wetland scene, and the banding programmes give observers plenty to keep an eye on. Another day started with viewing caged Orange-fronted Parakeets (to know what we were looking for), before a good sized group of the local members headed for the View Hill reserves to see if sightings could be confirmed in the wild.

A lovely sunny autumn day in the bush - the current RR managed to lose his team, but the previous RR led them home successfully - and after much strenuous use of taped calls a Yellow-crowned Parakeet was attracted to the group. The new Penguin field guide was in evidence - with a serious discussion over the age and sex of a South Island Tomtit being heard at lunch time, indicating that more information was needed to assist observers. Probably the most disturbing feature of the whole day was the overpowering hum of invaders in the form of wasps, which obliterated all but the strongest of natural sounds in the bush, and illustrated their infestation of beech forest in search of honeydew so liked by the native species.

The Department of Conservation has been undergoing another round of restructuring, with decisions to be released shortly (late May) on the structure to be operated in the Conservancies. While we must be hopeful that the new structures will improve the quality of species management programmes, there are certain to be some elements of disruption for some time to come. This will be especially so in the area of science where, after a number of reviews in the past ten years, the final "realignment" with the new departmental structures will not start until later this year. As the OSNZ Council will have been making decisions at the AGM on whether to proceed with a new Bird Distribution Atlas scheme, it is most important that DoC, as one of the prime users of the end results, has the ability to fully cooperate with this programme. The Society hopes that the development of robust, scientifically-based survey and monitoring programmes will become a primary management focus of the newly restructured DoC.

The arrival this week of the registration material for the 22nd International Ornithological Congress, to be held in Durban, gave me some nostalgic thoughts back to 1990 and before. The nostalgia was tinged with a certain relief that this time it was the South Africans and the city of Durban which will be charged with the organisational tasks involved for 16-22 August 1998. The programme is a good one, in a new and developing part of the birding world. If you do not already have the registration

material I have a few copies, to save writing to South Africa. Early registration closes on 31 October 1997.

Received at the same time was the latest *Ibis* (April 1997) which records the death of probably the world's most widely known ornithologist and birder Roger Tory Peterson. His creation of the field guide system for the identification of birds probably introduced more people to the study of birds than any other promotional and study tool. As an attendee at the Birdlife International Conference at Hamilton and the IOC in Christchurch in 1990, he continued to demonstrate, even at an advanced age, that there were still birds out there to be found, studied, photographed and painted. For those who met him or have used his field guides, we have lost a friend and promoter of the study of birds. He leaves us all with the continuing challenge to observe closely, record what we see, learn more, and tell others what we have found.

Happy birding - spring is on the way.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

President

Nominations for Regional Representatives 1998

Each region of the Society shall have a Regional Representative who will be an Officer of the Society and as such is responsible to the Council for the management of the region. Each RR shall serve for one year (from 1 January 1998) and is eligible for re-election.

Nominations for the Regional Representative of each region of the Society will close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 1997. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must be a financial member of the Society.

If more than one valid nomination is received by the Secretary a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 1998 year.

RAEWYN EMPSON
Secretary

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer 1996-1997

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes.

The Beach Patrol, Moulting Recording and Nest Record Schemes continue to run with moderate levels of support, usually with most input from a relatively small number of dedicated individuals or groups. My impression is that support for these projects is steadily declining, despite the Projects Assistance Fund providing considerable financial assistance to the regions to help with field programmes.

2. Review of the Society's special national studies.

Gull and tern colony counts.

Ralph Powlesland will present a preliminary report on this project in the next issue of *OSNZ News*.

Royal Spoonbills.

This year young birds were banded at Green Island and Omaui Island (Invercargill Estuary), but none were banded at Vernon Lagoons. This coming year it is hoped to band birds at all three locations. As usual, reports of sightings of colour banded birds are being made to the Banding Office by only a handful of members. Problems with some colour bands slipping from the tibia to the tarsus (or lost altogether) have caused some problems, but this should be alleviated by glueing bands.

Note: earlier national projects are being written up at the moment: Ray Pierce has completed a draft paper on Banded Dotterel movements, and has offered a paper on Pied Stilt movements to the Sibson/Heather memorial issue of *Notornis* on waders; likewise, Paul Sagar has offered an analysis of the ten years of wader counts to the same issue.

3. Advice on projects.

Through the year I have been called upon a couple of times to give some advice on several local or individual projects being mooted by members, or projects that are nearing the analysis phase.

4. New Studies.

At the September 1996 Council meeting, several new national projects were proposed, especially Reef Heron and Variable Oystercatcher surveys, grebe surveys, a shag (colony) survey, and a golf course birdathon. These ideas will be discussed with RRs during the May meeting, along with the proposed new Bird Distribution Mapping Scheme.

5. Contact with New Zealand organisations.

On behalf of OSNZ, I applied to the Lottery Science Committee for funds to publish a special wader supplement to *Notornis* (honouring the contribution to

New Zealand wader studies made by Dick Sibson and Barrie Heather). This application was declined but forwarded to the Lottery Environment and Heritage Committee as a more appropriate funding source. Unfortunately they have a somewhat bizarre rule that requires applicants seeking support for publishing to present the committee with a draft of the manuscript before it will be considered. This is quite different to the way that Lottery Science has dealt with the Chatham Islands issue, and so our application was withdrawn for the time being.

6. Applications for funds from the Project Assistance Reserve.

A. Grants approved in 1996 were -

96.1	\$ 600.00 - Pierce - Pied Stilt data analysis
96.2	\$2000.00 - Junior study course in Marlborough
96.3	\$1375.00 - National field study course (Kaipara)
96.4	\$ 500.00 - Stephenson - Mokoia Island Moreporks
96.5	\$1500.00 - National gull and tern census

B. Reports on projects supported by OSNZ -

I am pleased to report that we have received better feedback on the grants given in the past few years, and many of these have now been published in *Notornis* or *OSNZ News*.

HUGH ROBERTSON

Field Investigation Officer

Beach Patrol Scheme in 1996 - preliminary report

This report covers the results from 412 cards up until 1 May 1997. In 1996 2,913 km were patrolled by OSNZ members and friends. Fewer patrols and less distance are being carried out by beach patrollers in the 1990s than were carried out in the 1970s and 1980s. No cards were received from Canterbury South and Fiordland regions. Only five regions patrolled more than 100 km of beaches in 1996. These were Northland West (975 km), Auckland West (538 km), Northland East (409 km), Wellington West (146 km) and Southland (128 km). A pleasing feature this year was 70 km of beach patrols on Outlying Islands, mainly by Mike Bell and Jos Bhuiyan at the Chatham Islands. However more beach patrols are needed from Auckland East, Bay of Plenty, Canterbury North and Canterbury South regions to make the scheme comparable with effort over the past 30 years.

Dead seabirds found in 1996 totalled 4,555. These were found at the rate of 1.75 birds per km. This total once again falls below the average of 9,000-10,000 birds per annum reported in the 1970s and 1980s, but it is consistent with the average totals of the 1990s. Of the coastal regions where greater than 50 km were covered in 1996, Taranaki had the highest rate of recovery at 3.6 birds per km. This was closely followed by 3.48 birds per km on Wellington West beaches. Most of the Taranaki birds came ashore in November and December, whereas most of those on Wellington beaches were found in January, February and November. The lowest rate of recovery was on Otago beaches, with 0.58 birds per km. Well done Otago beach patrollers for pursuing regular patrols in unrewarding circumstances.

Unusual finds included one Chatham Island Albatross found in July on a Chatham Island beach, one Fulmar Prion on a West Auckland beach in July, one New Caledonian Petrel on a Northland East beach in January, one Arctic Skua on a Chatham Island beach in January and one Long-tailed Skua on an Auckland West beach in December. A Black-winged Petrel found on a Taranaki beach in February was the first record of this species in a Taranaki beach patrol.

Although fewer birds than average were picked up in 1996, several species had larger wrecks than normal. 29 Black-billed Gulls were found at a rate of 1.13 per km. This is the highest rate of recovery since the start of the beach patrol scheme. Most were found on Southland beaches. The 43 Buller's Mollies reported in 1996 was the second highest number recorded in the beach patrol scheme. Most came ashore on Southland beaches in September. Flesh-footed Shearwaters were wrecked at a rate of 6.13 birds per km, the highest rate since 1974. Sooty Shearwaters were also wrecked in large numbers. Just over 900 were found by patrollers in November and December, mainly on North Island west coast beaches. Buller's Shearwaters, Fairy Prions and Australasian Gannets were also wrecked in moderate numbers in November.

The 1996 winter was either a good year for Southern Ocean seabirds or not many ventured north into the Tasman Sea, as very few Salvin's Prions, Blue Petrels, Kerguelen Petrels and Antarctic Fulmars washed ashore. The four Blue Petrels found in 1996 was the lowest number found on New Zealand beaches since 1971.

A correction to last year's beach patrol summary (*OSNZ News* No. 79) - the Common Tern reported in 1994 from Muriwai Beach was later identified by Alan Tennyson (MONZ) as a White-fronted Tern.

GRAEME TAYLOR

Convenor

Nest Record Scheme - report for the year ending 30 April 1997

This year, 26 members and friends contributed 307 cards covering 27 species, bringing the grand total to 24,122 cards. To date, 144 species are included in the scheme. Because of the national gull and tern colony survey, a very good number of Colonial Nest Record Cards (73) was submitted this year, but again disappointingly few given the number of colonies visited as part of national surveys of gull and tern colonies.

The number of contributors to the scheme was relatively low (only about 2% of New Zealand members), but it was good to get cards from several new observers. The diversity of species (27) was also low this year, as virtually no cards were submitted for common garden birds, such as finches, Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, and Silvereyes. However, on the other hand, some quality collections were submitted this year. Of particular note were good collections of cards from Northland: for Brown Kiwi from a Kiwi Recovery Programme Study by Pat Miller and others, for NZ Dotterel and Variable Oystercatcher from Leigh Honnor, and colonial gulls and terns from Richard Parrish. Bev Woolley kept an eye on NZ Dotterel nests on the Coromandel Peninsula, and Paul van Klink contributed information on nests of the small Yellowhead population at Mt Stokes in Marlborough.

The major contributors, in terms of numbers of cards, were: Pat Miller (79), Leigh Honnor (77), Richard Parrish (33), Bev Woolley (30) and Chrissy Wickes (24).

Information from the Nest Records Scheme has been used extensively in the new Field Guide - although it may appear that much is known, there are still lots of gaps in our knowledge, and we still need lots more cards of even the most common species to be able to analyse seasonal or regional trends in clutch size, etc. Little progress has been made on computerising the Nest Record Scheme data, because of my commitments to completing the Field Guide and subsequently catching up on a backlog of other tasks.

Many thanks to all of the contributors to the scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS IN 1996/97:

Ashburton OSNZ group, Tony Beauchamp, Wayne Bennett, Tom Buckley, Rogan Colbourne, Willie Cook, Bev Elliott, C. & Don Geddes, Leigh Honnor, Jeroen Lurling, Pat Miller, Kerry Oates, Richard Parrish, Ralph Powlesland,

Hugh Robertson, John & Stella Rowe, Paul Sagar, Colin Scadden, Betty Seddon, Rod Sutherland, Paul van Klink, Chrissy Wickes, Erika Woodger and Bev Woolley.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN 1996/97:

Brown Kiwi 80, Little Spotted Kiwi 2, Blue Penguin 1, Little Shag 1, White-faced Heron 1, Reef Heron 3, Canada Goose 1, Paradise Shelduck 1, Blue Duck 1, Variable Oystercatcher 77, Pied Silt 2, NZ Dotterel 43, Banded Dotterel 1, Black-backed Gull 7, Black-fronted Tern 5, Caspian Tern 27, White-fronted Tern 16, NZ Fairy Tern 2, NZ Kingfisher 1, Welcome Swallow 2, Blackbird 1, Yellowhead 7, Fantail 1, House Sparrow 2, Starling 3.

HUGH ROBERTSON

Nest Record Scheme Convenor

CSN - a reminder

The deadline for material to be in the hands of the island collators is 31 August. Anything received later will be held over until next year.

In the first instance, members should send their material to the appropriate Regional Recorder, who is responsible for collating the region's contribution. In order to have time to complete this task, Regional Recorders need to receive members' contributions by 31 July.

The CSN year runs from 1 July to 30 June, so now is the time to extract all those observations from your notebooks. To assist with the process, below is a list of the Regional Recorders to whom the appropriate observations should be sent.

Far North: Isobella Godbert, Waipapa West Road, RD2, Kerikeri, Ph. (09) 407 8058.

Northland: Pauline Smith, 11/31 Ford Ave, Kamo, Whangarei.

Auckland: Mel Galbreath, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland, Ph. (09) 480 1958.

South Auckland: Pam Agnew, 3 Dianne-Louise Drive, Bucklands Beach, Auckland, Ph. (09) 535 4222.

Waikato: David Riddell, Gordonton Road, Taupiri R.D.1, Ph. (07) 824 3877.

Bay of Plenty: Paddy Latham, 72 Simpson Road, Papamoa, Ph. (07) 542 0406.

Gisborne/Wairoa: Geoff Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa, Ph. (06) 838 8370.

Taranaki: Rosemary Messenger, Upland Road, No2RD, New Plymouth, Ph. (06) 756 7496.

Manawatu: Ian Andrew, 6 Eton Place, Palmerston North, Ph. (06) 358 1183.

Wanganui: Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson Street, Aramono, Wanganui, Ph. (06) 343 9992.

Hawkes Bay: Margaret Twydale, 124 Nelson Crescent, Napier, Ph. (06) 835 6563.

Wairarapa: Miles King, Olivers Road, Te Ore Ore, RD 6, Masterton, Ph. (06) 377 5252.

Wellington: Max Falconer, 188 Miromiro Road, Lower Hutt, Ph. (04) 389 5285.

Nelson: Gail Quayle, 6 Tressillian Ave, Nelson, Ph. (03) 545 0456.

Marlborough: Bill Cash, 67 Lakings Road, Blenheim, Ph. (03) 578 6594.

West Coast: Bruce Stuart-Menteith, P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki, Ph. (03) 731 1826.

Canterbury: Jill West, 59 Strickland Street, Spreydon, Christchurch, Ph. (03) 337 1151.

Otago: Alun Baines, 41 Marion Street, MacAndrew Bay, Dunedin, Ph. (03) 476 1022.

Southland: Lloyd Esler, 64 Herriot Street, Invercargill, Ph. (03) 217 9060.

Publicity Update

Field Guide - this excellent publication has to be the best publicity that the New Zealand avifauna has had since the previous field guide was updated in 1979. Note, too, the paragraph on the Society on pp. 13-14.

Telephone listing - thanks to Hazel Harty, our Membership Secretary, we now have a telephone and fax number listed in the Auckland phone book under Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Hazel reports that the use of both is increasing, with calls from overseas as well as from within New Zealand. It is hoped that other main centres will also have a listed number before long.

Advertising - in the meantime it has been decided to advertise the Auckland phone/fax listing in the classified ads of *Forest & Bird* journal to make it easier for prospective members and others to contact the Society. Regions could insert similar advertisements in their newspapers to boost membership, using a local phone number. Notices of field trips and evening meetings could be included. Remember that some local newspapers and Telecom area booklets will accept such ads free of charge for non profit-making organisations.

Publicity brochure - this attractive colour brochure is one of our most effective publicity tools. Don't forget to keep them in front of the public by placing them regularly at key places, such as public relations offices, libraries etc.

If you have any good publicity ideas, share them with others by sending them in to me and I will collate them. Waikato's stand at an information day held at Raglan is an example of good local publicity (see *OSNZ News* in March 1997).

STELLA ROWE

Plea from the *Notornis* Editor

Before I took up the Editorship of *Notornis*, my predecessor, Barrie Heather, amused me with his characteristically witty run-down on authors' follies. I have heard that Editors, with time, can become permanently dissatisfied with the rest of humanity, who they may come to see as an amorphous mass of imperfect authors. I have also been warned that any form of reward is rare, and should be cherished to the highest degree. Many of his prophecies have come true - but I have not yet given up the hope of reforming humanity. This is why I am composing this plea to you, Dear Prospective Authors.

The Editor's task is a surprisingly mundane one. It is not about power to exercise what is admitted to see the light printed - rather it is checking omissions, numbers, formatting, italics. *Notornis* has to go the printers in a rigidly standardized format. To help with this, a set of "Instructions to Authors" has been compiled. Authors are requested to follow these when preparing manuscripts for submission. This eases the Editor's life so much!

However, it seems that these are not read carefully enough. Over the last three years, I have received about 150 manuscripts intended for publication. The vast majority of them arrived in different, often in a very different, format from the one requested. Please read those blasted "Instructions"! They are now in the first issue of every volume of *Notornis* - you'll find them in the March issue too. You may know it by heart, but please, please check again. The world is changing fast, so there is the odd chance that your typist has got some old formatting instructions.

You might rightly say that the faultless *Notornis* issue is yet to come. I may reply - what do you expect when the manuscript which conforms to our formatting requirements is yet to come. We can only reach higher standards by working together.

So why not look up the "Instructions", comb it over, and delight yourself in letting me know about the errors and mistakes (which are no doubt lurking in there somewhere - nobody is perfect).

And take them out again when writing your next manuscript. At the next Annual General Meeting you may yet see an Editor with a wide, happy grin on his face... and have a *Notornis* we can all be justly proud of.

And don't forget: the full satisfaction of many hours of toil is reached only when the results of that work are documented, preferably on the pages of *Notornis*!

Happy and profitable birding.

GABOR LOVEI

The full-of-hope Editor of *Notornis*

Chatham Island Pied Stilts

Pied Stilts are among the recent self-introduced colonists of the Chatham Islands. A search of the literature indicates that the population may be on the rise. I am interested however in searching for any unpublished records of Pied Stilts in the Chathams. This may go some way toward indicating also if fluctuations are due to migration of the birds.

If you are able to provide records, I would be grateful if you could send them to:

FRANCES SCHMECHEL
P.O. Box 91

Lincoln, Canterbury 8152

Email: schmechf@tui.lincoln.ac.nz

Wanted: Talks for the Wellington AGM, 1998

Next year the AGM and Conference will be held in Wellington. Already a group of members has begun organising for the conference, so that details can be posted to members with the December *Notornis*.

The programme will include a Scientific Day, and so offers of talks are being requested. I'm happy to consider talks varying from five minutes to 25 minutes speaking time. Send a preliminary title and required speaking time to:

RALPH POWLESLAND
64 Roseneath Terrace
Wellington 1

Email: osnz1@ibm.net

Coromandel Kiwi Sanctuary

The Kuaotunu Kiwi Sanctuary is a newly established, non profit-making organisation, located north-east of Whitianga on the central east coast area of the Coromandel Peninsula. The sanctuary occupies approximately 5,000 ha. of the Kuaotunu Peninsula, and is bounded on three sides by the ocean and by State Highway 25 on the fourth. The sanctuary's operational zone includes private and public indigenous forest, pine plantation, farmland, wetlands and coastal dunes. The aims of the KKS are to protect and enhance the environment of this area to ensure kiwi survive and prosper.

The Kuaotunu Peninsula is geographically well suited for such a sanctuary, with easily defined boundaries, good access, a relatively low number of predators, and a largely environmentally aware community. This area had previously been identified as a "kiwi hotspot" by Sid Marsh in 1992/93. Subsequent monitoring has recorded the highest call rates for the Coromandel programme (18 calls/2 hours).

The sanctuary proposal was launched to the public in late 1995, with a favourable and enthusiastic response. A committee of local people was formed, an incorporated society established, and Dame Cath Tizard has agreed to be the Patron. The tangata whenua are Ngati Hei, and are involved with and supportive of the proposal to date. Close liaison with DoC Waikato, Regional Council, landowners, iwi and user groups is developing.

For further information, or to join the society, contact:

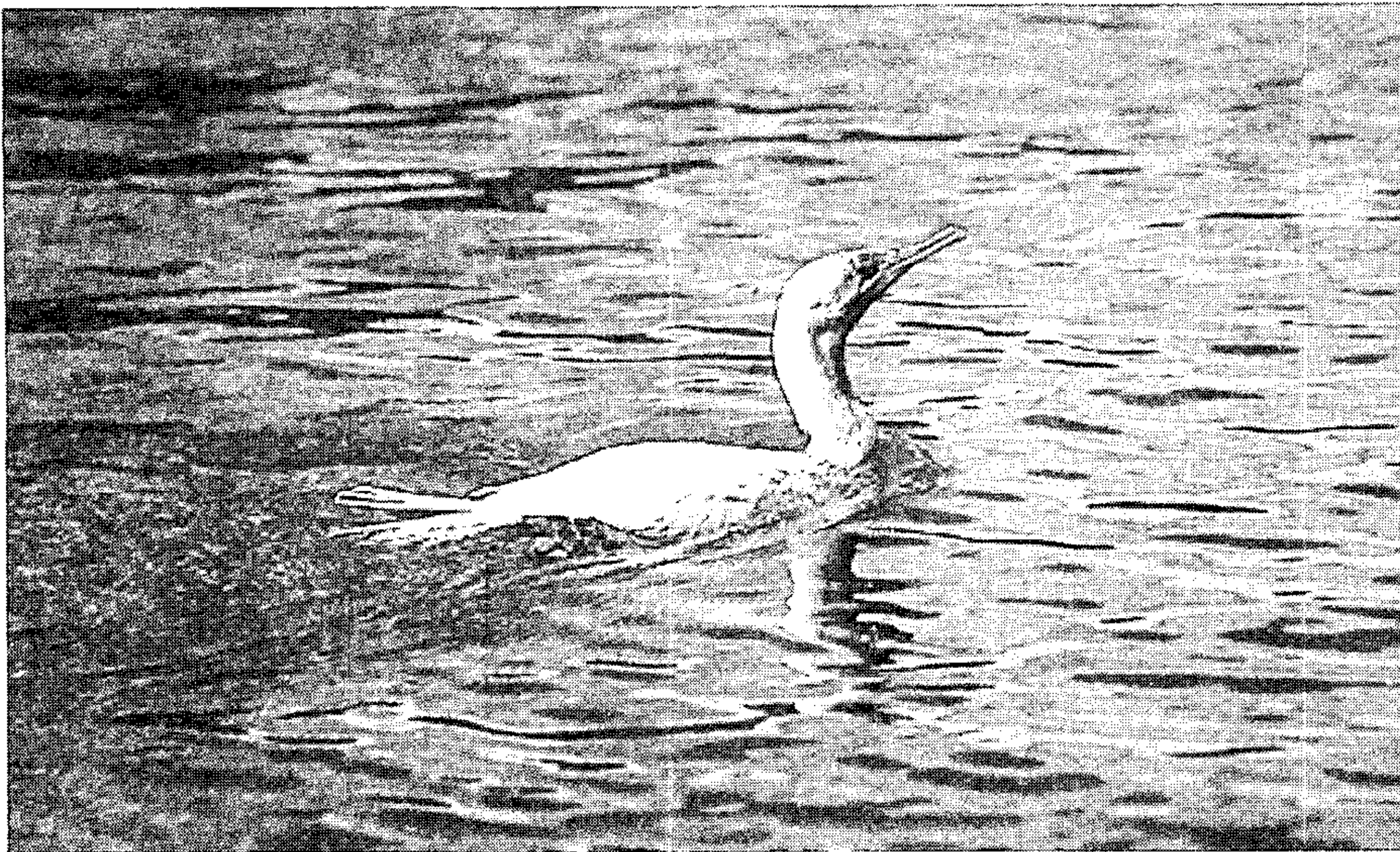
Kuaotunu Kiwi Sanctuary Inc.

1 Blackjack Road

R.D.2 Whitianga

Ph/fax (07) 866 2034

ADELE SMAILL



Mystery Bird?

I would welcome opinions on the bird featured in the accompanying slide, taken by me on 9 April 1997 at Western Springs, Auckland. I showed the slides at a recent Auckland evening meeting, and the general opinion was that it was an albino Little Black Shag. This is also my opinion, judging by the bird's bill.

It was difficult to approach and quite nervous in true Little Black Shag fashion. It is, however, not a true albino as it has dark eyes. I was unable to see its legs.

I have not seen the bird again and have not found anyone else who has. Had it not been for the photos, I was beginning to think I was hallucinating!

GEOFF MOON



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Rarebits

Shore Plovers - The focus of Shore Plover recovery continues to be Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf. To date one trial release and two larger releases have been carried out since August 1994, the aim being to establish a new, self sustaining population on the island.

The biggest hurdle has been site fidelity, with a significant proportion of released birds dispersing from the island to neighbouring estuaries and sandy beaches (as distinct from the wave platform habitat characteristic of South East Island). Regular sightings have been made from as far away as Onemana, near Whangamata on the Coromandel Peninsula. Several dispersed birds have also returned to Motuora and appear to be using a combination of surrounding islands and beaches as their regular habitat.

21 eggs were collected from the one self sustaining population in the Chathams in November to augment the captive population (both numbers and genetic spread). The egg transfer was frustrated by delays due to bad weather and the absence of available boat transport. A boat was secured at the last minute (literally) and the thick mantle of fog lifted off Pitt Island, allowing the light plane pick up and transfer to main Chatham for the regular flight to Wellington. The eggs were collected between 7.30 am and 9 am on South East and set in the Mt Bruce incubators by 4 pm.

All 21 eggs successfully hatched and 20 chicks fledged; 12 at Mt Bruce and 9 at Peacock Springs in Christchurch. One chick was lost at Peacock Springs from a fractured leg. The egg transfer to Peacock Springs served as a skills development exercise and to boost numbers at Peacock Springs.

The captive breeding season was a decidedly average one. The captive population stands at 25 birds - 13 at Mount Bruce and 12 at Peacock Springs. The latest additions will be flock mated/paired from August, with the aim of establishing 10-12 pairs for nest season's production of juveniles for the release programme. Seventeen captive reared birds were released on Motuora in February.

Colour band problems continue on South East, with a significant number of adults carrying old and recent injuries caused by colour butt bands slipping over feet and toes or cutting into limbs. Canterbury staff are currently perfecting a new double wrap around band and solvent which will be trialled and, if successful, used to reband the population in the near future.

(Shaun O'Connor)

Kokako - Intensive possum and rat control at Mapara has resulted in another bumper season of Kokako chicks this season. What's more, the season is far



Kokako at Mt Bruce, originally from the Waikato.

Photo P. Cuming

from over and 50 chicks have fledged from monitored nests already. The monitoring team have so far found 45 nests; 29 of these were successful. A similar number of pairs are still nesting, many of which have not yet been monitored. This substantial production will stand the Mapara population in good stead for the next few years (up to five) while we relax possum and rat control. We certainly aren't walking away from Mapara, seeing this as the next phase of "pulsing", as a responsible (and cheaper) approach to forest ecosystem management.

The Mangatutu Kokako project being managed by Laurence Gordon of the Otorohanga Zoo Society and the Native Forest restoration Trust continues to grow from strength to strength, with nearly 1200 ha. of forest near Rangitoto Station now being managed to a Mapara-like standard. Fourteen Kokako chicks have fledged so far, and robin and Kereru numbers appear to be increasing significantly too. Laurence hopes he may be able to get up to 20 Kokako chicks fledged by the end of the season. One falcon nest has also been found. Not bad for almost a one man band!

NZ Robins - Many readers will remember the headline news a few months ago reporting that 50% of the robins living in a forest block at Pureora died following an aerial 1080 carrot operation where there may have been an abnormally high level of chaff (small pieces of which are normally screened out) present in the bait. The surviving robins were followed through the nesting season, with 72% of nests successful compared with only 13% of nests successful at a nearby site where no poisoning had occurred.

In 1995/96 Hazel Speed followed robins through a bait station rat and possum control operation at Waipapa and found that the adult population had doubled by the spring, following a nesting season with a success rate of 65% the previous summer. We can therefore reasonably expect that with a 72% nesting success rate in the 1996/97 summer, the robin population should have recovered to a level similar to that existing before the "disastrous" 1080 drop. On top of this

the population is likely to have a more even sex ratio, due to better survival of nesting females during the 1996/97 summer.

(Phil Thomson, Phil Bradfield,
Jason Roxburgh)

North Island Weka - A project which aims to ensure the survival of North Island Weka on the mainland is up and running in the Toa Toa and Whiti-kau Valleys between Motu (north-west of Gisborne) and Opotiki. An initial census of Weka numbers, using call count surveys over two months, has indicated a population of approximately 625 birds in the valley floors and bush faces. Using the data from this survey and information from visual sightings of Weka, two study areas, each of approximately 400 hectares, have been selected, one in each valley. One will be trapped for mustelids and feral cats, the second area will be left as a control.

A focus of the project over the next three months will be to colour band as many Weka as possible in the study areas, and use radio telemetry to gain more information on Weka movements. Of particular interest is chick survivorship and dispersal. Seven juvenile Weka will be fitted with transmitters before fledging and tracked closely. Adult Weka will be fitted with transmitters to determine territoriality and, most importantly, locate nest sites. Predator control is scheduled to start in winter, by which time at least ten pairs of Weka will have been banded in each valley, and transmitters attached.

(Cam Speedy, Chris Buddenhagen)

Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre - It's been a good season for Campbell Island Teal with four of six potential pairs breeding successfully. This is a major boost to the programme, as breeding over the last two seasons has been confined to only one wild origin pair. Three young captive bred females produced by this pair have been the key to the current season's success. They were flock-mated from August 1996, paired with wild origin males, and subsequently went on to breed. The tally was 13 ducklings, with a swing toward males (8 to 3) with the final two juveniles still to be sexed. One duckling was successfully hatched and hand reared (another first for the species) after the egg was late to hatch and abandoned. Despite efforts to the contrary, he is overtly different (tame) compared to his siblings. The time is ripe to develop a release strategy and introduction programme for this species in the foreseeable future.

A second trial to artificially incubate and hand rear Grey-faced Petrels as an analogue for Taiko was undertaken over winter 1996. Changes from the experimental design applied the previous year included a larger sample size (20 eggs plus two chicks transferred from West Auckland), a split (12:8) of eggs collected fresh, to eggs collected mid-term incubation from the wild (the twelve

fresh eggs were split again, half incubated at a higher temperature regime and half at a lower temperature regime), and a modified rearing diet (different oil and less oil in the oil/squid/fish ratio plus supplements).

Last year 20 eggs were collected mid term, of which two were infertile and eight successfully hatched. Seven chicks were lost inside 13 days due to deficiencies in the oil component of the diet, and one chick was reared to 67 days when it was lost to a bacterial infection.

Back to this year's trial - of the full sample of 12 fresh eggs, five hatched. Of the remainder, one was infertile, six were added within two weeks of artificial incubation. Of those that hatched, one died at full hatch, and four were reared. Of the eight mid term eggs, one was damaged on arrival, two died at hatch, the remaining five hatched successfully and were reared.

Thus a sample of nine hatched chicks and two chicks brought from the wild were reared, once again proving a major challenge. The modified diet appeared to circumvent the problems encountered the previous year, until we reached the 20 to 30 day age class, when chicks started to die in rapid succession. After a gruelling week of analysis and troubleshooting by the rearing team and Massey University pathologists, the problem was pinned on a calcium deficiency in the diet (and an unpredicted relationship between the oil and calcium components of the diet). The calcium component was increased but by the time it was fully "assimilated" into the chicks' digestive system we were down to the last and youngest chick, Jasper.

Jasper progressed well from this point through to 110 days old, when "she" was transferred to Tiritiri Matangi Island on 28 December. There she was settled into a custom-made burrow in a temporary enclosure and fed daily until her interest in food waned.

Target fledging weight and wing length were achieved in early January, by which time Jasper was making regular forays from the burrow, exploring her surroundings and exercising her wings. By 6 January she was taking practice flights from the burrow roof. The burrow was checked the following morning with no petrel in residence. Daily checks were made of the surrounding terrain and nightly checks of the burrow site for several days with no sign, so we are confident that Jasper fledged and headed for sea.

This is a particularly important milestone, in that Jasper originated from one of the sample of fresh eggs, having received only two to three days natural incubation before transfer to Mt Bruce. To our knowledge, this is the first time that a petrel has been artificially incubated and reared anywhere. We will watch with interest to see if Jasper returns to Tiritiri Matangi Island in future years.

The release of nine juvenile Kaka at Mt Bruce in June 1996 has exceeded expectations with all but one still resident at the time of writing. Six of the residents are still topping up daily at the supplementary feed stations, with the remaining two periodically using the supplementary feeders but generally preferring to forage in the reserve.

Meanwhile our captive pair has produced four chicks from their first clutch which are due to emerge from the nest box any day now. Subject to approval, these birds will be released this coming June to trial a third sample (captive bred and parent reared) in the reintroduction/supplementary feeding experiment.

(Shaun O'Connor)

Westland Petrels - Amanda Freeman, Chippy Wood, Lynn Adams and numerous enthusiastic helpers continued to monitor the productivity of 60 study burrows in the Westland Petrel colony near Punakaiki. Petrels have now fledged in what seems to have been a good year for breeding. Westpower have started realigning, and placing underground, a section of power line which crosses one of the major petrel flight paths to the breeding colony. Although the realigning was a little too late for this year's fledglings, it is hoped that collisions will be significantly reduced in the future.

One story that started tragically has ended happily. An adult male was found dead, caught in the crook of a tree. The adult was from a study burrow, so we were interested to know how a chick in the burrow fared. Although we did not know the precise age of the chick when its dad died, we suspected it was a few weeks after hatching. The following month we checked the burrow with some trepidation, a tin of fish in hand. The chick was still alive, and at a weight similar to other chicks. We fed it tinned fish (salmon!) which it readily took and checked it again a few weeks later when many of the other chicks were fledging. The chick was still in the burrow but close to fledging (c.20% down on the bird), and at a healthy weight with lots of fat reserves. From these observations it seems a single adult is able to feed its chick successfully through to fledging.

Okarito Brown Kiwi - Eighteen pairs of birds have been monitored fortnightly and eleven of these pairs have bred this season. So far seventeen eggs have been laid, of which ten have hatched in the wild and two in an incubator. Three of the remaining five were due to hatch in January. One pair of kiwi has laid three eggs this season, the first record of this in Okarito. Another monitored female has been located at different times with two different males.

Possum control was undertaken around all nest burrows using philprooff bait stations and 1080 pellets. All stations were pre-fed with non-toxic bait. Good

pre-feed take was noted at most stations. Bait take dropped noticeably after poison was applied. Following initial control effort, stations were pulsed until the egg either hatched or was removed.

Chicks hatched in the wild were all removed from the forest when they were between one and five days old. All chicks were taken from the nesting burrows and transported in a bucket lined with paper towels to the Alexanders' property at Arahura. No problems were encountered when transporting chicks.

There are now twelve chicks in captivity at Arahura and all are doing well, although one was being treated for a slight wheeze. The chicks are spread between the aviaries and the brooders depending on their age.

Staff at Franz Josef assisted Rogan Colbourne to remove an egg that was close to hatching at the Three Mile, and to monitor a dummy egg placed under the nesting pair. Egg temperatures were recorded from the dummy egg and captive incubation temperatures were worked out. From the regime worked out by Rogan, all the containers in the incubator were filled with water, and additional water dishes and damp towels were placed in the incubator to reduce water loss. The water loss from Okarito Brown Kiwi eggs was greater than recorded in North Island Brown Kiwi eggs.

Six juvenile kiwi were transferred from Arahura back to South Okarito Forest. Two of the first birds subsequently died. Another bird had an accident and has now recovered back at Arahura, but will be permanently in captivity as a result of a loss to the tip of its bill. The other three chicks were still alive eight weeks after release. They have lost considerable weight but appear to have reached a stage where their weight is fluctuating so, hopefully, we will see weight increases reasonably soon. They are now using deep burrows which has to be viewed as a positive sign. If these chicks survive then another release is planned for May.

Recently 38 sites have been surveyed within approximately one third of the forest. 49 birds have been heard from these sites. To date the resurvey of the forest is approximately half complete, with 12 unbanded birds caught and banded. Of the 49 birds, 36 (17 females and 19 males) were heard during the previous survey or are monitored, banded birds. The remaining 13 birds (ten females and three males) were located at sites either not previously surveyed or were heard at sites where previous surveys had failed to locate birds. Eight birds (six females and two males) were caught and banded from the 38 sites, four of which were known from the previous survey.

(authors unknown)

Mohua - A number of Mohua projects are currently underway in Southland. Science and Research has a study in the

Eglinton Valley from which Peter Dilks reports a population crash in the order of 70% during a non stoat plague year. Mohua counts in the Blue Mountains and near Tuatapere have also shown declines. Predator trapping is being undertaken in the Blue Mountains to look at the predator guild composition, and trials are being carried out in Fiordland looking at tunnel design for stoat trapping. Contractors have also carried out surveys of Mohua in several Southland areas to increase our information on distribution and numbers. Survey areas include the Takitimus, Eyres, Rowallan, Dean, Longwoods and Blue Mountains.

New Zealand Dotterels - Cat control work carried out at five sites appears to be increasing the breeding success of New Zealand Dotterels on Stewart Island. At least seven pairs are nesting on Table Hill, an increase on the single pair three years ago. Monitoring over the breeding season suggests that the population is heading for its third successive increase, and is potentially two years ahead of the specified performance measures. Full credit to the cat poisoners involved.

(Andy Roberts)

Kakapo - A highly successful research season, thanks to Comalco's generous sponsorship, means that significant progress is already being made towards achieving the goals outlined in the Kakapo Recovery Plan, and with this continued sponsorship we look forward to even greater results.

During their normal transmitter change, 45 Kakapo were caught and a blood sample and cloacal and cloanal swab taken from each. The three main objectives were genetic analysis (to know the degree of relatedness of our birds and to be able to identify individuals from moulted feathers), health norms and energy expenditure. Kakapo are remarkably free from pathogens, but a female on Maud Island was found to have a low grade bacterial infection which was successfully treated. The technique known as doubly-labelled water was used to measure energy expenditure. Preliminary results indicate that non-breeding Kakapo have exceptionally low field energy expenditure.

Daryl Eason is developing means for collecting and assessing Kakapo sperm - we hope at least to master sperm collection techniques. Faeces are being collected on a regular basis from specific females, which are being tracked at night to see what and where they are eating. The aim of this exercise is to spot any change in diet that might be associated with - and perhaps trigger - breeding. We have also negotiated the return from the United States of faecal material collected during the 1981 breeding season (that is, from the last successful breeding season, from the last natural Kakapo breeding population!). Hormone therapy research on Mallards is

continuing, and investigations into scent and hearing.

The breeding season has been relatively successful on Codfish Island this year so far. Six females laid 12 eggs. Seven of these were fertile, though one female's was very small. Two embryos died mid term and one chick died on hatching, probably from a bacterial infection from an adjacent dead embryo. From the information gained this season, there are one or two possible improvements we could make to increase hatchability. The first is to ensure good incubation of the eggs (ie. encouraging females to spend less time off the nest by supplementary feeding or keepings eggs warm in the mother's absence). Secondly, access to all nests at an early stage to assess egg viability and remove any dead embryos to avoid contamination of healthy eggs.

(Paul Jansen)

Regional Roundup

Northland

In February we had our first meeting of the year, with an update and overview of local ornithological subjects, the most unusual being Gerry Brackenbury finding a dead Channel-billed Cuckoo in the Far North. This was followed by a DoC video on predation of various species' nests at night, which held surprises for some of us - cute little Moreporks take the chicks of smaller birds. The last weekend in February we carried out the annual census of the Pouto lakes in lovely fine weather.

During the second weekend in March a group stayed at Miranda which had many interesting birds to watch as usual. We were invited to join Adrian Riegen's team of cannon netters who intended firing the cannon at around 7.30 am on the 8th, but instead we were treated to a spectacular thunderstorm over Thames, with heavy rain, and it had to be called off. Hopefully it will be possible another time.

We held our AGM at our March meeting, and spent three weekends and some week days involved in post-breeding counts of NZ Dotterels and White-fronted Terns throughout our region and in the Far North. The population of NZ Dotterels has risen by about 100 in Northland which is a pleasing result.

Audrey Williams gave an interesting talk at our April meeting on information she obtained as our representative at a workshop on oiled birds. This is a topic relevant to our region as we have a major oil refinery and consequently many oil tankers passing along our coastline. Environmentally sensitive areas need to be identified and a priority list of species compiled. The information that there is at present only 20 miles of boom for over

200 miles of coastline is a sobering thought.

A small group of members flew to Taiko Camp on Chatham Island and spent a chilly but interesting time tramping about in the mud sorting gear etc. ready for the next expedition. We saw pigeons flying about daily, but Weka numbers were much lower than usual around camp, and we had a problem finding takers for the nice fat rats we caught!

May has been a busy month with everyone getting ready for our first time as hosts for the Annual General Meeting and Conference.

(Lorna Simpkin)

South Auckland

Dick Veitch spoke on rare species on islands and caring for them in March, accompanied by his usual array of wonderful slides. In April Gwenda Pulham brought us up to date with her fascinating study of Fairy Terns and showed admirably what one person can achieve, and in May Matthew Lark revealed some of the trials and tribulations of a radio reporter trying to convey a message of the joys and excitement of birds without the aid of pictures.

A flock of 20 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were at Wairamarama in January. The cockatoo theme was continued with 30-50 Galahs around a farm at Mangatawhiri over several weeks in April.

Kidds, on the Manukau Harbour produced its usual crop of sightings in February and March - 15 Little Terns (including three juveniles), six Far-eastern Curlews, 21 Curlew Sandpipers, ten Red-necked Stints, a Mongolian Dotterel and Terek Sandpiper, plus 13 Pacific Golden Plovers. By May a single Greenshank was very vocal but hard to spot amongst the huge (c.5000 birds) flock of SIPO, and 300 or so godwits and 200 knots.

(David Lawrie)

Waikato

In January ten members attended the Kaipara Field Study Course at Rodney College. Valuable skills were learnt and will be put to good use back here.

February's traditional members' evening featured the Kaipara reports and members' activities over the summer. The following Sunday found five members in South Auckland's patch at Karaka. After driving down the shore stile (!) we were treated with a feast of rarities - Pectoral and Terek Sandpipers, a Mongolian Dotterel, plus seven white flagged and one orange flagged Turnstone. The white flags were from among the 64 birds banded at Karaka in October, while the orange flag was from Australia. This is the first New Zealand sighting of an orange flagged Turnstone.

March 16 dawned bright and clear

for the most important day for Miranda since the 1990 Centre opening - the declaration of the International Shorebird Network site. Several members attended the day to hear Doug Watkins talk about the network, and to see Conservation Minister Nick Smith unveil a commemorative plaque.

Our local AGM a few days later saw major changes. Nick Dunckley took over the Treasurer's post from Hugh Clifford, who in turn will be our new RR, taking over from Bev Woolley. Since 1992 Bev has led Waikato OSNZ, and on behalf of the region I extend thanks to her top effort. Hugh has been Treasurer since 1992 and we thank him also for his sterling service. All these positions commence in the new year. At the conclusion of the AGM, Bev took us on an audio-visual tour through Hawaii's exotic, endemic birdlife. It was amazing to hear the bird calls, with some birds having five or six different songs.

The New Zealand Dotterel census was carried out in March - 24 were found. For the first time, a colour banded bird was found on a Waikato west coast beach, having been banded at Pakiri River as an adult.

On April 7 we surveyed Lake Waahi and, although the Huntly lake did not provide a sighting of a bittern, the heron family was represented by seven Cattle Egrets, an unusual place for them.

April 16 found us travelling to Cabbage Tree Island, off the coast of New South Wales, courtesy of Professor Hugh Clifford. The island is home to the only known colony of the *leucoptera* race of Gould's Petrel. These attractive small petrels nest in nearly inaccessible burrows in rocky ground under the island's native cabbage trees. It was a pleasure to hear Hugh speak about these birds, as, although temperature and terrain were testing, it was easy to see that he enjoyed every minute of his two weeks there. After his talk Hugh was awarded, with a special capping ceremony, the Order of the Grey-faced Petrel. This unique hat, shaped rather like the bird, and complete with band and twink on the head, was made for the occasion by Anita Seddon. Prof. Clifford (Dip OGFP) is now fully prepared for RR duties.

In May, ten members were 3,000 feet up on Rangitoto Station, east of Otorohanga. Beautiful weather allowed good views of Bellbirds, Tui, North Island Tomtits, Whiteheads, Kereru, and close-ups of North Island Robins. Kokako mew calls were heard. Ranginui and Baldy were good positions for viewing Hale-Bopp comet. Thanks to Ingrid Dunckley for organising a lovely weekend.

Recent Waikato bird sightings include four Riflemen on Pirongia, and a Reef Heron at Ruapuke in January, a Morepork calling in a Hamilton suburb, and c.500 godwits at Raglan in February, increasing to 750 in March. Also in March a Long-tailed Cuckoo struck a window in

Hamilton, and a North Island Tomtit was seen on Karioi. There were 17 Cattle Egrets at Lake Ngaroto by 4 May.

(Paul Cuming)

Hawkes Bay

A visit to the Ahuriri Estuary in February held few surprises for those game enough to brave the heat of one of our few hot, summery days this year. A few godwits were feeding at low tide, some golden plovers were showing signs of breeding plumage, and Banded Dotterels and Spur-winged Plovers were the only species which were plentiful. A Royal Spoonbill was seen from the end of Turfrey Road.

A field trip in April to Horseshoe Lake at Elsthorpe was our first visit there since 1993. A large flock of c.200 NZ Scaup was a highlight. Other waterfowl included Grey Teal, Mallards, Shovellers, Black Swans and a pair of Mute Swans with a well-grown cygnet.

Twenty NZ Dabchicks were counted, but there could have been more as they were spread out all over the lake. A flock of Little Black Shags were roosting on the lake shore. A few Little and Black Shags were present.

44 Royal Spoonbills were counted on the channel of the Ahuriri in mid March. Now that duck shooting has started they have moved down by the bridges.

There was an unconfirmed sighting of a Kookaburra around Dannevirke in March. Small numbers of Black-fronted Terns have returned to Ellison St/Waitangi.

(Christine McRae)

Taranaki

The AGM held in March reports no change in officers. After discussion on the Sugar Loaf Islands Draft Management Plan, it was decided by those present that the eradication of rats be the priority from ideas included in a submission forwarded.

Also in March a harrier was seen feeding on frogs taken from a lake edge. Four chicks hatched and fledged from a swallow's nest built in a farm shed and a Reef Heron's nest was found on Lion Rock in the Sugar Loaf Marine Park.

At the April meeting Barry Hartley showed slides and spoke about his subantarctic islands trip - excellent value! Lucy's Gully, off State Highway 45, was found to support a good variety of native birds. Four Cattle Egrets have spent our summer in the area around the Waiongana River mouth.

A field trip in the Mangorei Track, Pouakai Ranges, was cut short as the weather deteriorated, so another trip was made to the Mokau River estuary. It was most enjoyable, as 33 species were observed. Highlights were three Royal Spoonbills feeding at low tide, a Fernbird approaching to within one metre without the use of a tape - four were seen and heard. At a "cuppa" stop, some members

demonstrated (with varying degrees of skill) blowing on a blade of grass held between the thumbs. Kaka calling? Many Silvereyes were seen fluttering around a spider web built in the top branches of a young kahikatea (probably that of a nurseryweb spider), and it seemed that the birds were taking turns, probing the web, and feeding on the spiderlings. We noted that some species of native trees had a plentiful supply of fruit available for the bush birds. There was no sign of the Banded Rail seen from a kayak by Barry, so we will return.

70+ White-fronted Terns are still in the area of the Patea River mouth, and 110+ were observed on the coast, just north of Mokau. In mid April a flock of up to 40 Banded Dotterels had been seen at the Waiongana River mouth. A few SIPO have been reported, birds are obviously still moving north. 500+ Paradise Shelducks and 70 Canada Geese were noticed on a Waitara lake.

An article in a local paper reported the story of an orchardist who became sick of the resident Starling population attacking his fruit, so he began encouraging harriers onto the property by feeding them. Result... perfect fruit, fat harriers and an exodus of Starlings.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Wellington

Our field work has continued with kiwi counts on Kapiti Island, and the last, post-poison drop five minute counts last weekend. Some members had a successful weekend on Mana Island looking for NZ Robins and doing some banding. The harbour survey has been delayed for a few months.

The three evening meetings have been up to their usual standard. Matthew Lark, broadcaster, gave us a comprehensive insight into his work. His radio programmes will be all the more interesting now.

Ascension Island was just a name to most of us, but, after Brian Bell's comprehensive account of the history of the island and his work there, we are much more knowledgeable.

Viv Hextoll is the founder of the Day's Bay Penguin Sanctuary. This remarkable woman has created a reserve especially for Blue Penguins, with about 40 burrows to replace the areas lost by redevelopment. She also runs a hospital for seabirds and one for bush birds. Viv and her group of volunteers have been trained to deal with oiled birds should an oil spill occur in this region. All this right on our doorstep, and most of us knew little about it.

(Ros Batcheler)

Canterbury

A thoroughly enjoyable, though somewhat damp, Anzac weekend was enjoyed by the Canterbury and Nelson participants who gathered at Punakaiki - apart from one, who regrettably spent the time in Greymouth hospital. The coast was explored to the north as far as

Karamea and we ventured into some superb bush areas. The undoubted highlight were Bruce Stuart-Menteth's Westland Petrels - though reluctant to show themselves in the evening (even if very much present vocally), those few hardy souls who ventured back before daylight were rewarded with petrels scrambling all over the viewing platform. Thanks to Bruce for the opportunity, and for showing us around his "patch" over the weekend.

Our other recent field trip took us on a pleasant walk through beech forest at View Hill in search of parakeets. Superb weather would have made for an enjoyable day, even if we had not finally attracted a single Yellow-crowned Parakeet to taped calls.

Paul Sagar spoke at an evening meeting about his lengthy and detailed study of South Island Pied Oystercatchers breeding on South Canterbury farmland. Individual colour band combinations have shown much about dispersal, site and mate fidelity and other things. It appears that birds breeding in ploughed paddocks fare better in the breeding stakes than those on pasture.

Colin O'Donnell and Jane Sedgely revealed secrets about Long-tailed Bats in the Eglinton Valley in Fiordland - extraordinarily difficult "birds" to study. Among other things they have discovered that roosting groups normally return to their own roost, not that of other groups, despite mingling in the forest at night when feeding. Roost sites are rotated every few days, females coming to collect their young from the previous site and flying off with them firmly attached under the wing to the new site. A fascinating subject, enlivened by videos. The researchers have recently been thrilled to discover Lesser Short-tailed Bats in the area as well.

Unusual birds in Canterbury have been conspicuous by their absence over the summer and autumn, but a White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage at Lake Ellesmere was noteworthy. Also of interest is a report by Peter Munns of 15-20 adult White-fronted Terns, in late February, seen five-bombing about 2 km below the Highbank power station, near the Rakaia Gorge and a long way inland. He also reported two chicks on the ground.

(Ron Nilsson)

Otago

Dead Yellow-eyed Penguins have been found on various beaches in Otago. The finger has been pointed at a biotoxin, although there is nothing conclusive yet. This will make it vital to carry out a very thorough count to find out the extent of the mortality of these penguins.

One cannot help but be impressed by the gentle and patient care of adult Yellow-eyed Penguins leading their offspring into the surf. And after that, leaving them to their own devices. One chick recently didn't like getting wet or

something, and, after one wave crashed over it, had enough and scrambled back to dry ground. The parents had gone fishing by then and left junior on its own. Twenty minutes later, three adults came down the slopes of Sandymount and this time the chick, after joining these three, went into the surf and all penguins were gone for the day.

A pair of adults were guarding two almost fully grown chicks, when one adult lurched forward and chased away a Sooty Shearwater hiding in the grass two metres in front of the family. The shearwater took off in a southerly direction, towards Brighton. A Hooker's sealion has been observed catching and devouring a Yellow-eyed Penguin, taking 25 minutes.

This year's Waitangi Day count of Royal Spoonbills revealed numbers well down. This was most likely due to the high winds experienced in coastal Otago over the summer. Maukiekie was the most affected colony, with very few chicks raised.

Recent reports include three Pectoral Sandpipers at Kaikorai on 6 February, with more reports of a Kookaburra - at Aramoana in late February and Challis Point in early March. They have not been checked for accuracy. There has also been another sighting of a NZ Falcon in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens. Alan Baker saw two in March.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland

A few Cattle Egrets have turned up so far. It is likely that many died in last year's big freeze. Nine Rooks have been sighted at Orawia. A Paradise Shelduck was seen killing and swallowing a Mallard duckling at Deep Cove. 15 Pacific Golden Plovers were counted at Awarua Bay during our summer wader census. There were also 40 Red-necked Stints, an unusually large number.

Ross Sinclair climbed Mitre Peak in January and found a lot of Rock Wrens on the top. He reports very few birds seen or heard while kayaking around Dusky and Breaksea Sounds. Kea were reported digging up carrots in Manapouri gardens last winter.

Four members spent a night in our hide on the Redcliff wetland in February. The most interesting observation was hundreds of Canada Geese in 'V' formations circling the lake and settling on neighbouring farmland.

Four members hiked to Mason Bay on Stewart Island in early May. We counted 472 dead and 52 live Sooty Shearwaters on the beach. Other casualties on Mason Bay included 38 juvenile Mottled Petrels, nine Broad-billed Prions and a Brown Creeper. An eroding midden at the south end of the bay produced a bone fish-hook, kuri bones and a kuri dropping. Recent beach casualties in Southland have been a Royal Albatross and a Snares Crested Penguin. There was a wreck of juvenile Stewart

Island Shags in February.

(Lloyd Esler)

Chatham Islands

The past few months' bird watching on the Chatham Islands have been focussed on seabirds. On the summit of South East Island an adult Juan Fernandez Petrel was found ashore in a burrow. During 1984-92 several birds were seen and heard flying over both South East and Mangere Islands. However this is the first record of this species prospecting ashore in the Chathams or the New Zealand region.

During autumn, eight Erect-crested Penguins were found ashore, moulting at various locations across the islands - the Forty Fours, the Pyramid (2), South East Island, Taupeka Point, Kaingaroa, Wharekauri and Owenga. Local residents also suggest that the numbers of Blue Penguins are on the rise.

The beaches have been casting up plenty of exciting finds lately - Buller's Shearwaters, Blue Petrel, Westland Black Petrel, Black-winged Petrel, several Pitt Island and Chatham Island Shags, along with large numbers of Sooty Shearwaters.

Other sightings of interest are White-capped and Black-browed Mollymawks at sea off Point Durham and in the Pitt Strait. The first Cattle Egret of the season returned in early May to a coastal paddock at the Tuku.

Several yellow flagged White-fronted Terns have been seen on the main island away from the breeding colonies. Most of the terns have disappeared from the Chathams for winter, so keep an eye on those tern roosts in your area.

(Mike Bell)

Please note that White-fronted Terns were banded with yellow colour bands recently on the mainland, so care must be taken to determine if terns have yellow colour bands or yellow flags.

What's On



Northland/Far North

28-29 June - Far North harbours census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

10 April - evening meeting. Advisory Services, Alexander Street, Whangarei. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

11-13 July - Motukawanui Island. Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

Monthly beach patrols of Dargaville beaches (Prue Cozens (09) 437 0127), 90 Mile Beach and Karikari (Isobela Godbert (09) 407 8058, John Dawn (09) 407 8653) and the east coast (Jean Hawken (09) 438 1985, Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076).

Auckland



Evening meetings - first Tuesday of each month (except January): at the Auckland Museum (entry via west door) at 7.45 pm.

Muriwai Beach patrol - Sundays following meeting. Ph. Mike Graham (09) 817 5517.

21 June - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

22 June - Kaipara Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen.

29 June - First of Thames census. Ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284.

1 July - evening meeting, oiled wildlife response in New Zealand.

26 July - mystery wetland outing. Ph. Gwenda Pulham (09) 480 5535.

5 August - evening meeting, DoC recovery plan for kiwi.

2 September - evening meeting, bird extinction at the Chatham Islands.

28 September - tree planting on Motuora Island. Ph. Chris Bindon (09) 836 6183.

South Auckland

10 June - evening meeting, Papakura Croquet clubrooms, Chapel Street, Papakura. Fairy Terns. Ph. David Lawrie, (09) 238 8407.

21 June - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

29 June - Firth of Thames census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

Waikato

21 June - Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan Harbours census. Ph. Bev Woolley (07)-896 9340.

16 July - evening meeting, DoC conference room, London Street, Hamilton. Full Flight Native Bird Conservation Trust. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

19 July - visit to aviary of above, then birds on Mt Kakepuku. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

20 August - evening meeting, Pureora robins.

23 August - Cattle Egret count. Ph. Nick Dunckley (07) 389 1335.

17 September - evening meeting, native bird predation.

20 September - bush birds field trip. Ph. Bev Woolley (07) 856 9340.

Mt Karioi 5 min. bird counts and monthly beach patrols of west coast beaches. Ph. Paul Cumming (07) 856 3891

Hamilton Lake counts - second Sunday of the month. Ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729 or Brian Challinor (07) 855 2561.

Bay of Plenty

28 June - winter wader census, Kaituna cut area. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Taranaki

Manawatu

Wanganui

Hawkes Bay

21 June - Ahuriri/Waitangi Estuary census. Ph. Christine McRae (06) 879 9136.

22 June - Porangahau Estuary census. Ph. Christine McRae.

6 July - half day, Tukituki Estuary. Ph. Christine McRae.

27 July - evening meeting. Ph. Christine McRae.

24 August - Lake Purimu/Wanstead Lagoon. Ph. Christine McRae.

28 September - 'Corrakane' Kereru Road. Ph. Christine McRae.

Wairarapa

Wellington

7 July - evening meeting, NZ Robins in Pureora and Kapiti. Conservation Sciences Centre, DoC, 58 Tory Street.

13 July - Wellington Harbour survey. Ph. Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Mapping scheme - Hugh Robertson (04) 385 8407.

Karori reservoir - Colin Miskelly (04) 472 5821 (work).

Nelson

Marlborough

Canterbury

22 June - Silvereye banding, Landsdowne Valley. Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 348 1889.

28-29 June - winter wader count. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

30 June - evening meeting, Middleton Grange School, Riccarton. Laughing Owls. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

19 July - Count of Southern Crested Grebes and cockatoos. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

28 July - evening meeting. Effects of tourism on the Okarito White Heron colony. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

25 August - evening meeting, Chatham Is Oystercatcher update. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

29 September - evening meeting, Black Stilts. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 385 8080.

West Coast

July 96 - June 97 - Weka road kill survey. Representative samples for each month, including status of dead birds, presence of dwellings, other road kills and vegetation types. Casual information welcome. Information to Bruce Menteach, P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki.

Otago

Evening meetings - 3rd Wednesday of even months, Otago Art Society building, 8 pm. Ph. Peter Schweigman (03) 455 2790.

15 June - winter wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

18 June - evening meeting, Royal Spoonbills.

11 October - Yellow-eyed Penguin count. Ph. John Darby (03) 476 1676.

9 November - summer wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.

13 December - Yellow-eyed Penguin count. Ph. John Darby (03) 476 1676.

Southland

Evening meetings, Southland Museum, second Wednesday of even months. Ph. Lloyd Esler (03) 217 9060.

Beach patrols - each weekend during winter. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

15 June - winter wader count. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

DEADLINE FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE IS 10 AUGUST