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Note: Deadline for the March issue will be 10th February.

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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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Campbell Island Snipe Discovered

One of the most significant ornithological discoveries in New Zealand this century occurred on 9 November 1997, when a team searching for Campbell Island Teal on Jacquemart Island caught a snipe and saw seven others. Up until this time, there was no evidence that snipe ever occurred in the Campbell Island group.

Campbell Island (11,268 ha.) was discovered in 1810, but naturalists did not visit the island for several decades after this. It is assumed that Norway rats and cats were introduced before 1840, as none of the early naturalists reported snipe, teal or pipits, all of which are now confined to rat-free islets scattered around the main island.

The snipe were discovered by Jeremy Carroll, Dave Barker, James Fraser and three bird dogs, who were searching the various islets for further populations of Campbell Island Teal (otherwise only known from nearby Dent Island). Eight snipe were seen on 19 ha. Jacquemart Island, and one of these was caught and photographed.

Perhaps the two biggest surprises arising from this discovery are that previous workers who visited Jacquemart in 1980 and 1984 did not record snipe during their admittedly short stays, and that snipe have not been found on other rat-free islands around Campbell Island, including 20 ha. Dent Island.

It is likely that the Campbell Island Snipe will prove to be an endemic subspecies of the New Zealand Snipe *Coenocorypha aucklandica*, which has surviving populations on the Snares, Auckland and Antipodes Islands. The tiny remnant population on Jacquemart Island will remain vulnerable to extinction unless cats and Norway rats can be eradicated from Campbell Island.

COLIN MISKELLY

Transferred Shearwaters Increase

The breeding population of the newly established Fluttering Shearwater colony on Maud Island increased sharply this year, when breeding was recorded in six burrows. Last season, two burrows were bred in and one pair successfully fledged a chick (see *OSNZ News* 83).

At present five of the breeding burrows are still active, with adults incubating eggs or brooding young chicks. One burrow was lost during the egg stage, when the burrow was flooded during heavy rain.

The number of shearwaters at the colony has been boosted by the addition of three unbanded birds (birds not transferred to the island). All of these unbanded birds have paired with transferred birds. As yet, nine of the transferred chicks have returned to the colony, with at least six of these now breeding (three of the twelve breeding birds' identities are unknown at this stage).

All of the transferred chicks which have returned to the colony are from the first three years of transfers, with birds from the final three years of transfer still to begin returning. It is expected that the colony will continue to increase.

With a small, expanding population of Fluttering Shearwaters now established on Maud Island, the primary aim of the project has now been achieved. This is the first time that a procellariiform species has been shifted to a new (artificial) colony.

LOUISE & MIKE BELL

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Nominations for Council

Under the provisions of the new Constitution, the following Council members retire in May 1998, and nominations for a three year term are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created.

Tony Crocker - council

Mark Nee - Treasurer

Christopher Robertson - President

Hugh Robertson - council

Stella Rowe - council

Also retiring are Raewyn Empson (Secretary) and the South Island Vice-President Paul Sagar. Nominations for these positions are called for a one year period only.

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1998, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated. Retiring officers are eligible for re-election.

Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1998 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1998 in writing and must be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1998 OSNZ Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Wellington on Saturday 30 May 1998.

Raewyn Empson

Hon. Secretary

P.O. Box 12397

Wellington

AGM Wellington 1998 - an invitation

The 1998 Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Wellington over Queen's Birthday weekend, 28 May to 1 June 1998. The venue is the Airport Hotel in Kilbirnie, and the agenda includes a full day of scientific talks and presentations, and a day and a half of field trips. Registration forms are enclosed with this issue of *OSNZ News* and *Notornis*.

Pre-registration - your registration form, along with your registration fee and (if appropriate) a deposit towards accommodation and field trips, should be sent to the organising committee before 18 March 1998. Accommodation cannot be guaranteed if a deposit is not received by 18 March. The field trips to Kapiti Island, Mana Island and the Lake Kohangatera shag colony will be limited to 50, 30 and 10 people respectively, and so late registrants may miss out on their preferred field trips.

Travel arrangements - a free bus is available from the airport to the Airport Hotel, with panels explaining the system in the luggage pick-up areas. If you require to be met from your arrival point, please give details on your registration form.

Accommodation - participants from out of town will be accommodated at the Airport Hotel and 747 Motel (see details on the registration form). The 747 Motel is five minutes walk from the Airport Hotel. Please make your own arrangements if these facilities/costs do not meet your requirements.

Council and Regional Representatives' meeting - the OSNZ Council and RRs will meet from midday on Thursday 28 May and all day on Friday 29 May, with a joint meeting on Thursday evening and on Friday.

Registration - the registration desk will be open from 3.00 pm on Friday 29 May, and the desk will reopen between 8.30 and 9.00 am on Saturday 30 May. A light meal can be provided between 6.00 and 8.00 pm if required.

Symposium on Wellington ornithology - a symposium on Wellington ornithology will be held on Saturday morning. These papers will describe the activities of the Wellington region of OSNZ, and set the scene for the field trips on Sunday and Monday. Anticipated subjects include OSNZ involvement in the rat eradication on Kapiti Island, ecological restoration on Mana Island, the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary project, shag research in the Wellington region and the pilot bird distribution mapping scheme. This symposium will be advertised in community newspapers and open to members of the public.

Contributed papers and posters - conference attendees are invited to submit titles for papers to be presented

between 2.00 and 5.00 pm on Saturday 30 May. Any topic relevant to ornithology in New Zealand or the South Pacific region will be considered. Talks should be 15 minutes long, plus another five minutes for questions. Please send your offerings in with your registration form, or contact Ralph Powlesland, Science and Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

There will also be facilities provided for posters and displays if you wish to present the results of your own research or branch surveys in this way. Please indicate if you wish to present a poster on your registration form, so that we can ensure that space is available.

All day field trips - four different field trips are offered for Sunday 31 May, although the Mana Island field trip will only run if a minimum of 20 people sign up for it. Alternative trips will be organised if weather conditions cause cancellation of any or all of the island trips. All participants should be prepared for wet and cold conditions, and have stout footwear if intending to visit the islands. Early registration is recommended for those wishing to visit Kapiti or Mana Islands.

Wellington-Picton return ferry trip - an opportunity to see the seabirds of Cook Strait in winter in the company of (at least one!) highly experienced guides. A wide variety of albatross and petrel species is normally seen at this time of year. Participants will travel on a Transrail ferry, and so there is effectively no limit on numbers. Cost - \$30.00 per person, payable at the registration desk (but please indicate on your registration form if this is your preferred or second choice for a field trip). Binoculars essential.

Kapiti Island Nature Reserve - many members were disappointed when the Kapiti Island field trip was cancelled due to bad weather during the 1996 AGM at Foxton Beach. We can't make any promises with the weather, but know that this trip will be popular. Those of your who have visited the island before may be interested to see changes that have occurred since the (as yet unconfirmed) rat eradication in September-October 1996. If successful, this will be by far the largest island ever cleared of rats. Kapiti Island will be celebrating 100 years as a reserve in December 1997, and so participants will have a chance to hear of the many conservation achievements on this island over the last century.

Kapiti Island has a wonderful diversity of native forest birds, and your experienced guides will be able to tell you about OSNZ involvement in five minute bird counts, and Little Spotted Kiwi, NZ Robin and Stitchbird monitoring. Other threatened species on the island include Kaka, Saddleback, Takahē, Kokako and Brown Teal, though not all can be guaranteed on the field trip.

This trip is limited to a maximum of 50 participants, and must be prepaid (\$38 per person, plus \$15 bus fare if required) with your registration form. All but the \$8 permit administration fee will be refunded if the trip is cancelled. Please indicate your second choice field trip on your registration form in case the trip is fully booked.

Mana Island Scientific Reserve - This is a rare opportunity for members outside of Wellington to visit this very special island. Mice were eradicated from 217 ha Mana Island in 1989/90, and over 220,000 trees and shrubs have been planted to date as part of a comprehensive ecological restoration programme. Wellington OSNZ members have been closely involved with monitoring bird populations there, including Sooty Shearwaters and the recently reintroduced NZ Robins. Mana Island has the largest Takahē population outside of Fiordland, and is also the site for innovative experiments to attract gannets and diving petrels to new colonies beginning in November 1997.

The charter boat for this trip can take 30 people, but we need a minimum of 20 participants to keep costs down. Prepayment of \$25 per person (plus \$12 bus fare if required) must be made with your registration form, but will be refunded if the trip is cancelled. Please indicate your second choice field trip on your registration form in case the trip is fully booked.

Matiu Scientific Reserve and Wellington Harbour cruise - Matiu/Somes Island is a former quarantine station which has been opened to the public (and managed solely for conservation purposes) since July 1995. Ship rats were eradicated in 1989, and this island is an important regional breeding site for seabirds and coastal birds, including Blue Penguin, Spotted Shag, Variable Oystercatcher and Reef Heron.

If enough people sign up for this trip, an extended harbour cruise is offered, allowing close inspection of Mokopuna and Makaro/Ward Islands, and the chance of seeing a variety of seabirds and marine mammals. This extended trip plus a half day on Matiu will cost \$22 per person, payable at the registration desk. There will be a part refund if the harbour cruise is cancelled.

Wet weather options - The organising committee will have a variety of bad weather options available, including visits to the new museum (Te Papa), behind the scenes at the natural history section of the museum, and a visit to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. Some of these are offered as half day field trips on Monday 1 June (see below).

Half day field trips - four half day field trips are offered for the morning of Monday 1 June. Please note that if you participate in the Black Shag or Matiu/Somes Island field trips you should not schedule your departure from Wellington before 2 pm.

Karori Wildlife Sanctuary - this exciting conservation initiative just five minutes from downtown Wellington proposes to enclose a 250 ha. catchment with a predator-proof fence, and to eradicate all introduced mammals from the valley. Wellington OSNZ members started baseline five-minute bird counts here in October 1995 and will complete this first series of counts just after the AGM. While it is hoped that fence construction will be underway before the AGM, there is already a short prototype section that will be shown to participants, plus a visitor centre explaining the entire concept.

Visit to Black Shag colony near Lake Kobangatera, Pencarrow - this colony consists of 35-40 pairs nesting in the tops of karaka trees on the side of a steep gully. During Queen's Birthday weekend, many pairs will have nestlings, the oldest being 3-4 weeks old.

This trip is restricted to ten people plus two guides and is dependant on suitable weather. It is a 30 minute walk to the colony, including ten minutes up a steep hillside - reasonable fitness is essential. The track is invariably muddy and exceptionally has involved some wading! Gumboots are the most practical footwear. Binoculars are essential and a telescope preferable.

Matiu/Somes Island - see description above. Participants will be ashore for about three hours, and return to Queen's Wharf by 1.30 pm. Cost - \$14.00, payable at the registration desk.

Te Papa - Our Place - we are all looking forward to the opening of the new national museum in early 1998. This will be the first opportunity for many members from elsewhere in the country to see what their taxes have been spent on.

Other activities - the organising committee is planning a variety of events and activities during the evenings, including ornithological quizzes, a sales table and a photographic competition.

Photographic competition - members are invited to enter colour or black and white prints up to 25 x 20 cm suitable for mounting on a display board. There will be three categories:

- best New Zealand bird portrait
- most bizarre or unusual New Zealand bird photo
- birdwatchers in action - humorous snapshots of OSNZ members

Photographs are not required before the conference, but we ask members to indicate whether they intend to enter on the registration form. Please remember to write your name and region on the back of your photographs (maximum of three per entrant). Judging will take place on Saturday and winners will be announced at the AGM dinner.

Sales table - there will be an opportunity for members to offer for sale ornithological books, paintings,

equipment etc. While this is intended as an opportunity for members to trade goods among themselves, any donations to Wellington branch funds would be gratefully received!

We are looking forward to seeing you in Wellington for the AGM. If the weather is kind we can guarantee you new and memorable ornithological experiences - if not it will still be a great conference.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE
1998 Conference and AGM

REMINDER - SUBSCRIPTIONS
FOR 1998 ARE NOW DUE



From the President's Desk

As I return to the Chathams after some rest and recreation on the mainland, and after another attempted sojourn attached by fish-hooks to the Pyramid, I have been reflecting on the wind levels we have experienced this year and the amazing ability that some of our large seabirds display in exploiting windy conditions. Last week I noticed that one of the Whitbread round-the-world race yachts had managed to set a world record for single hulled vessels of 449 nautical miles in one day, while covering about 6,000 nautical miles in 16 days. Across my desk recently were the satellite tracking records for an albatross that consistently managed to average a minimum of 600 nautical miles a day for about 24 days (more than 14,000 nautical miles) on end. An amazing record, but one does wonder when the bird had time to feed or sleep! An interesting story when it appears next year.

A busy Council meeting in September found the Society in good heart, with a significant increase in membership throughout the year, which is most pleasing. I hope all members will welcome the newcomers and assist them in their pursuit of good bird study. It is pleasing also to see such a good number of student members joining who will, I hope, continue to broaden our knowledge of birds through some innovative studies. The publications review needed some more work before completion, so final decisions have been carried over until the conference weekend next year. This will also ensure that Council and RRs will jointly have the opportunity for full consideration of the final recommendations.

Regrettably Paul Sagar submitted his resignation as South Island Vice-President due to the pressures of work. Paul has always been a staunch worker for the Society and will still be active in many of the local and national projects with which he is still connected. Kerry-Jayne Wilson, also from Canterbury, and a lecturer at Lincoln University, has agreed to be co-opted into the role until the next AGM. There will of course be elections for this position next year, to cover the balance of Paul Sagar's term. Kerry-Jayne, as one of her tasks, is wrestling with the final recommendations from the publications review. Many thanks to both Paul and Kerry-Jayne.

It was also with considerable regret that I was informed of the death of Professor Brian Marples during October at the age of 90 years. Previously an Honorary Life Member (1980), he automatically became the first Fellow of the Society last year. There is a good summary of his activities in *Notornis* 27: 386-387. As the person who, sixty years ago, wrote to various ornithologists in New Zealand suggesting the formation of an ornithological society, he can be truly considered our founding mentor.

I was fortunate enough to visit him near Oxford in 1986 and had a fascinating day delving into medieval history of England as we travelled to Tewkesbury Abbey and back. Over a not inconsiderable amount of fine Scottish fluid in the evening, some of the early history and personalities of the Society came under review. However the most telling ornithological observation was on the back of the loo door. Here, sheets of cardboard (ex cereal packets) had been drawn into squares, and observation of the garden birds faithfully recorded each day of the year to a standard observational sampling routine! Brian told me that they had been back in the house there for 20 years after retiring to the UK, so the collection of cards would have made a significant observational series.

One of the great monuments to Brian Marples in the OSNZ is the continuing Classified Summarised Notes which record the small snippets which so easily get forgotten or lost. A collection of grains of sand makes a beach. Equally, a collection of small observations regularly made provides the foundation for determining the trends which are so important to determining the future management of many of our bird species. It is possible that some form of replication of "peepings from the loo" needs to be formalised at specific regional sites throughout the country to ensure that a simple monitoring system follows the trends in our changing avifauna. Such a developing database would be a fitting living memorial to the founder of the Society. A more formal obituary will appear in *Notornis* in due course.

The ornithological event of the year must go to the discovery of the small population of snipe on Jacquemart Island

in the Campbell Island group. Distinctively different taxa of snipe are found on the Snares, as well as Auckland and Antipodes Islands. The only way to land on Jacquemart is from the air. At some stage in the past the various New Zealand snipe were probably better fliers than they are today. Perhaps this tiny population, like another of the Campbell Island rarities, the Campbell Island Teal, is a remnant of a wave of immigration left isolated during the development of our interesting island species. It also shows that wherever you go there is a need to be prepared for the unexpected - whether it be old or new. We look forward with interest to more formal details of the find.

I suppose I must finish with the wind and climate generally. El Nino conditions seem to be becoming quite prevalent around various parts of the country and reflect the marked extremes which are features of this type of climatic event. Please be vigilant for unusual bird behaviour, nesting or mortality. Some of the effects may be delayed for even as much as 1-2 years, but you should be watching now, especially those who have studies which have been going for a number of years. The beach patrollers should also be active after such long spells of westerlies, and we may get some live Australian stragglers to add to the new species list.

Have an interesting birding summer, and best wishes for the Festive Season.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

Kakapo Update

Fifty four Kakapo are known to survive - twenty females and thirty four males. Apart from six hatched on islands, all have been relocated since 1975 to offshore islands to protect them from introduced mammalian predators. No natural population is known to remain.

After an interval of five years, breeding occurred this year on Codfish Island. The close-order management strategy and techniques devised following the failed nesting event on Codfish in 1992 - involving support of nesting females through provision of supplementary foods, effective protection of nests from rats, and intensive monitoring of each nest - proved not only practicable, but crucial to successful breeding. Three chicks were raised - the greatest number to survive since 1981. This, together with the fact that no adult mortality is known to have occurred for almost four years, means that the remnant population has increased slightly for the first time since management began!

During the 1997 winter five birds were moved between islands and one "new" female found.

Little Barrier Island - twelve birds (nine male and three female) are on Little Barrier Island. With the exception of two males raised on the island in 1991, all have free-ranged there since being transferred from Stewart Island in 1982. Two of the females and four of the males are supplementary-fed. Predictably, supplementary food consumption is declining with the onset of summer. As in previous years, attempts to train the remaining female ("Jean") to accept supplementary foods were unsuccessful.

Some bowl (=court) activity has been seen in recent weeks and six bowl systems are currently active, but booming has not yet begun. Breeding last occurred on Little Barrier Island in 1995 with two infertile clutches.

Maud Island - seven birds (four male and three female) are currently free-ranging on Maud Island. All are supplementary-fed. As on Little Barrier the level of supplementary food consumption is declining with the onset of summer. Maud (and the Nelson-Marlborough area generally) is currently experiencing severe drought conditions.

Some bowl activity has been apparent since September. One male was recorded booming on the night of 19 November. From late November there has been considerable movement by both males and females beyond normal home ranges. To date breeding is not known to have occurred on Maud.

Whenua Hou/Codfish Island - thirty one birds (17 male - including three juveniles from the 1997 breeding season - and 14 female) are on Codfish Island.

The three juveniles raised this season are doing well. The two parent-raised birds ("Manu" and "Tiwai") are now eight months old and are approximately 2.4 and 2.2 kg respectively, which is almost a kilogram heavier than their mothers. Both are still within their natal home ranges and associating with their mothers. The partially hand-reared juvenile ("Sirocco") has recently maintained a weight of 1.7-1.8 kg. His respiratory condition as a nestling has left a legacy of slight wheeziness.

With the exception of one adult male ("Ken") recovering from a transmitter harness injury, all Kakapo on Codfish are free-ranging. Eleven of the 14 females and nine of the 17 males are supplementary-fed.

Six bowl systems have shown signs of activity during the last few weeks but booming has not yet been heard.

Holding island - four males suspected of being infertile or of low fertility are being held on an island off southern Stewart Island.

Movements - two female Kakapo of unknown age ("Maggie" and "Bella") from Little Barrier Island were transferred to Codfish Island in June. Both had free-ranged on Little Barrier Island since 1982 and had received food supplements since

1989/90. Bella is not known to have attempted to breed during this 15 year period. Maggie, without visiting the lek, produced two infertile, single egg clutches in successive seasons immediately after commencement of supplementary feeding. No abundant masting plant which might serve as a natural stimulus to breeding appears to exist on Little Barrier. Thus, relocation to Codfish Island, where Kakapo have bred twice in synchrony with the infrequent masting of a dominant tree species (rimu) may well facilitate breeding by these two - if in fact they are still capable of doing so. Codfish offers further advantages, in that the lek is closer to most female home ranges and is more accessible than that of Little Barrier.

For these two reasons too, the captive female "Hoki" from Maud Island was released in July 1997 to free-range on Codfish Island.

A previously unknown female ("Solstice") was found in the south of Stewart Island in June and transferred to Codfish Island by members of an expedition organised and led by Grant Harper. Solstice was released directly to free-range and has not as yet accepted supplementary foods. The possibility of further individuals persisting in the vast scrub lands of southern Stewart Island cannot be discounted, making further searches there a priority.

Two Codfish Island males, believed to have mated with females that produced infertile clutches earlier this year, and whose fertility is thus in question, were removed to a holding island in September.

Breeding - nine of the ten female Kakapo present on Codfish Island in early 1997 are believed to have visited the lek during February and to have mated. Within eighteen days of mating, six of these birds had nested. The others apparently did not nest. The six females laid a total of twelve eggs, of which seven were fertile. All the eggs were left with females (male Kakapo play no part in incubation or chick-rearing). Five eggs hatched. One chick died immediately after hatching, and there were two early/mid-term dead embryos.

Two of the four surviving nestlings were left with their (supplementary-fed) mothers. The other two were removed during the nestling stage for veterinary care and hand-raising when ailments were detected. All four survived to fledging age (c.11 weeks) when one of the partially hand-raised chicks ("Gromette") died. The necropsy report by Professor Stockdale of Massey University's Faculty of Veterinary Sciences concluded that the cause of death stemmed from prolonged use of antibiotics (in particular Batryl). Without such intervention however, death would have resulted anyway, for Gromette was severely stunted as a result of chilling in the egg/early nestling stage, as well

as underfeeding in the first two weeks of life.

As occurred in the 1992 season, the rimu mast crop failed - fruit did not ripen and aborted - and as in 1992 it was apparent that non-supplementary-fed females were stressed for food to such an extent that they were unable to incubate effectively or to raise young. On average, non-supplementary-fed females spent more than twice as much time off the nest foraging each night than supplementary-fed females. It was therefore necessary to take Gromette from her (non-supplementary-fed) mother at 12 days of age.

At c.23 days Sirocco developed respiratory problems during a prolonged cold wet spell and began to lose weight. He responded to treatment and was successfully hand-raised at Burwood Bush. Sirocco was returned to Codfish Island in early July and was released to free-range there in late November. All three young raised in 1997 were male - the two chicks that died were female!

Unless the cue(s) which trigger breeding in Kakapo can be identified and simulated, it is unlikely that breeding will occur again on Codfish Island until the next rimu masting season. Masting normally occurs at up to five yearly intervals. However there are indications that rimu masting may occur again in 1998. Graeme Elliott and Ros Cole have recently assessed rimu fruit development and have found it to be similar to that of this time last year.

Diet and feeding regime - investigations into the natural diet of Kakapo continue. Preliminary results from hormonal analysis indicate that some key foods have unexpectedly high levels of oestrogenic activity.

The year round *ad lib* feeding regime which has been in place since 1993 was discontinued in 1997. It has been replaced by a regime intended to simulate more closely natural cycles of food availability, through *ad lib* feeding during autumn and early winter, a reduction in the range and volume of foods in winter and early spring (so as to encourage foraging on natural foods as well as greater mobilisation of body fat reserves) and provision of a flush of food from late spring.

Following discussion with animal nutritionists from Massey University and Profile Products (Auckland), it is proposed during the coming year to phase out the existing range of supplementary foods and replace them with a pelleted diet formulated specially for Kakapo. This will make it possible to manipulate nutrient, vitamin, mineral and hormonal intake, while further reducing organophosphate levels.

General - "Ken", the Codfish male that suffered a severe injury to his wing base in 1995, is making good progress. Since January 1997 he has been held in captivity on Codfish while undergoing

treatment, including surgery in Invercargill on a number of occasions. Ken's management has broken new ground - it proves that mature, wild-raised Kakapo can adapt to captivity, and that it is possible for birds to survive repeated anaesthesia and frequent handling. Ken's wound has now virtually healed, but his latest blood tests indicate that infection is not under control.

Don Merton recently compiled the Kakapo passage for the latest volume of *HANZAB*, which is the most comprehensive and up-to-date account of Kakapo biology. Grant Harper (Kakapo Programme Officer, Codfish Island) resigned in August and his position has been filled by Mike Anderson, formerly DoC Stewart Island. Nadine Parker joined the National Kakapo Team in October on a two year contract to research aspects of diet through analysis of cuticles from droppings. Daryl Eason has been seconded for two months to the Echo Parakeet recovery programme in Mauritius.

DON MERTON

Kakapo Minders Wanted

My Kakapo team colleagues and I are seeking volunteers to help monitor any Kakapo nests next season (late January - early June 1998) and would like to invite applications from OSNZ members.

Nest-minders are expected to camp (for two nights in every three) near their allocated Kakapo nest in order to guard eggs/chicks throughout the periods when the female is off the nest feeding. Since breeding occurred on Codfish Island last season, it would seem unlikely that breeding will occur again for several years. However, there are indications that the rimu is going to mast for a second year in succession, so we must be prepared for breeding. It's also likely that one or two of the Little Barrier Island birds will nest this season. There are however no guarantees that there will be any nest anywhere!

Nest minders need to be keen, reasonably fit (ie. able to carry a small 12 v. battery up a steep, muddy track each day), willing to live in basic field conditions, to stay awake most of the night and to be available for a two week period some time between late January and early June!

Anyone interested in volunteering their services as a Kakapo nest minder should contact either Paul Jansen (ph. (04) 471 3236) or Don Merton ((04) 471 3291) for further details.

DON MERTON

National Kakapo Team

Rare Birds Committee

Applications are called for membership of the Rare Birds Committee. Applicants must have extensive experience with the identification of the major groups of birds which occur in New Zealand, particularly waders, seabirds and Australian vagrants. Access to a good ornithological library is also desirable. As with all positions in the Society, this is an honorary position, renewable annually.

Current members of the Rare Birds Committee are eligible for reappointment, but must apply in writing.

Applications must reach the Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 31 March. Applications should include a brief outline of experience.

RAEWYN EMPSON

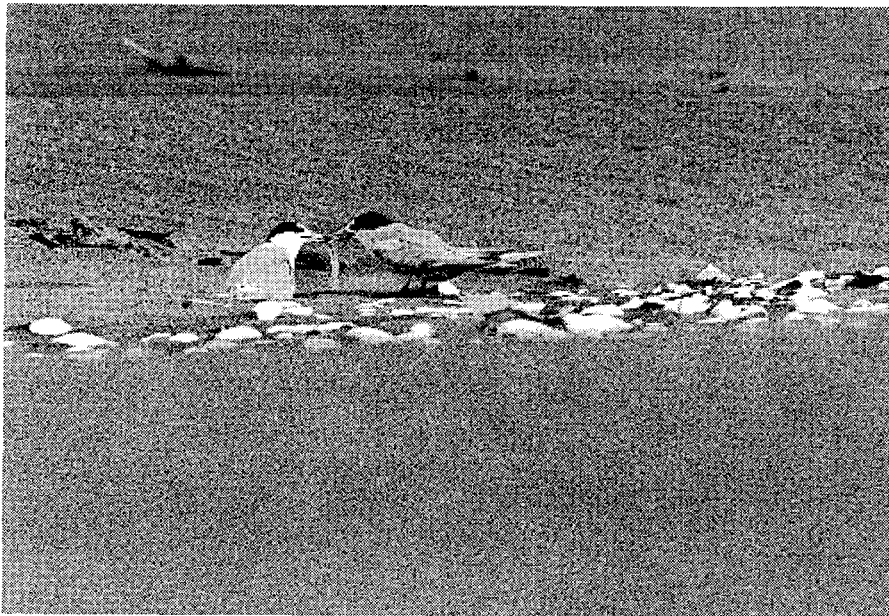
Hon. Secretary

Fairy Terns nest early

On the evening of Sunday 2 November 1997, David Wright, the Fairy Tern protection officer of the Department of Conservation at Papakanui Spit Stewardship Area (South Kaipara Head) telephoned me to say that he had located a newly laid, two egg Fairy Tern nest. He rang again on the evening of Tuesday 4 November to report yet another two egg nest, a few kilometres south of the first nest. The news delighted me, but surprised me also because Fairy Terns usually begin to nest from the middle of November onwards. The earliest recorded nest in recent years was at Mangawhai on 13 November 1995.

On Friday 7 November my field observations of the second nest revealed that the periods of time that each bird incubated the nest were very short. Ten minutes was the minimum recorded time between a changeover of the incubating bird, ranging up to thirty minutes maximum. This is somewhat briefer than the 58 minute average incubation period for females and 37 minute average for males recorded by Richard Parrish and myself during a breeding biology study of the species in the 1993/94 season.

Unfortunately horrendous westerly winds caused the desertion of one of the nests on Sunday 9 November and the other overnight on the same day. Two of the deserted eggs have been taken to Martin Hill at Auckland Zoo for artificial incubation.



Fairy Terns – Photo courtesy NZ Herald

If the occurrence of early nests and the brief incubation periods are an indication of an abundant food supply, then one would expect the re-nest interval for these two pairs to be less than twelve days, the shortest interval recorded to date. Only time will tell.

In 1990 Ray Pierce instigated a long term study of Fairy Terns, investigated plumage, longevity and population dynamics. Ray began individually colour banding unfledged chicks in 1991. Since then all the chicks that we have known about have fledged from either the Waipu or Mangawhai breeding grounds, so banding has been confined to these two east coast sites. One of the birds at the nest I was observing on 7 November was colour banded, and this was the first confirmed breeding of this bird. It is also the first confirmed breeding of a banded bird on a west coast site.

During the 1992/93 breeding season I monitored Papakanui Spit as a volunteer, because budget constraints had forced Auckland DoC to cease fencing and wardening the area. The first three nests I located were all lost to being covered in sand in high winds or to flooding by high tides. So when I discovered a fourth nest, and with another round of high tides due in a few days, the department very wisely decided to translocate the two eggs to Mangawhai Spit where a pair of Fairy Terns had been incubating a couple of obviously infertile eggs for some 42 days (the usual time is around 23 days). The translocation took place on 5 January 1993. The Mangawhai pair continued to incubate for another 13 days (55 days in total) and hatched and raised two fine chicks.

Sadly one chick has not been seen since, but the other of these banded chicks has been seen at Papakanui Spit for several summers now, and has in fact been the only banded bird to frequent the breeding site during the breeding season. My observations confirm that this

bird is breeding at the site where it was conceived, rather than its natal home.

The Department of Conservation has gathered together a fine team to take care of shorebirds at Papakanui this summer. Jo Ritchie is the project manager, David Wright the protection officer and an outstandingly capable local resident, Boyd Goodwin, is dealing to the predators. Another pair of eyes out there will be those of Sara Treadgold who is commencing her MSc on Fairy Terns. Of course there's the "odd" OSNZ volunteer!

GWENDA PULHAM

Norfolk Is Boobook

Surveys to determine the status of Norfolk Island's owl were sponsored by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1985, 1986 and 1987. Penny Olsen, a raptor specialist from CSIRO, led the 1986 and 1987 surveys and found only a single surviving bird, a female.

With the assistance of DoC, two wild-caught male Moreporks, the closest related owl, were taken to Norfolk Island in September 1987 and released in the national park. To offset the lack of natural nesting holes caused by the logging of mature trees, some twenty owl nesting boxes were erected. One of the Moreporks paired with the female Boobook, and after an unsuccessful breeding attempt in 1988, a brood of two hybrids, both female, was raised in 1989. A further two hybrids, a male and a female, were reared in 1990, but all their subsequent breeding attempts failed. The second Morepork disappeared at the end of 1988.

In 1993 the male hybrid paired with a female from the 1989 brood and reared three young. This pair have reared two young each year since, raising a total of

nine offspring to date. No other pair bred until 1996, when a brother and sister from the 1993 brood reared a single chick.

Census checks failed to find the original Boobook after 1995, and as she was then at least 10 years old and probably considerably older, it seems likely that she has died. Consideration was given to the recapture of the Morepork, her mate, but, in view of the lack of available males, that was not done, and in 1996 he mated with a female from the 1994 brood, one of his granddaughters, and reared two young.

As the two young which fledged in 1995 have not been found subsequently, the known population at the end of 1996 comprised the Morepork plus nine adult and five juvenile hybrids.

JIM MOORE

Saddlebacks on Mokoia Island...

On 12 April 1992, 32 Saddlebacks were released from Tiritiri Matangi Island onto Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua. Every care was made to help them settle in. Roosting boxes were hammered up for their convenience and about 200 nesting boxes were provided for their nests.

Doug Armstrong and numerous volunteers then monitored the Saddlebacks' progress to discover facts about them when put in this situation, and thereby make policies for projects designed to protect our endangered birds. There is interest, too, in DNA changes in birds breeding in isolated communities.

Each bird is identified by colour bands. It takes a bit of practice to observe these combinations quickly, getting the left leg right when the bird is facing you or looking away. And there is the problem of distinguishing green from blue!

Volunteers try to find and note the territories of breeding pairs and locate their nests. Once a month the nest boxes are visited for this purpose. There are maps and sheets of directions to help you find them. It is rather like a treasure hunt. The chicks are banded and the nest boxes cleaned out when the chicks have fledged. Saddlebacks nest twice in a summer.

It is sometimes necessary to move boxes around to persuade pairs to use them. They also tend to want to find natural sites in hollow logs or on ledges under dead black ponga fronds. It is a thrill to find a natural nest. One feels one has outsmarted a smart bird. Natural nests are also beautifully made. However, as hunting for natural nests takes a lot of time, it is considered better to move boxes and hope that the birds will use them. Natural nests are common now,

and there are a lot of unbanded birds around.

The project started with 36 birds and in the summer of 1995/96 there were 164, not counting a few in isolated areas - it seems that Mokoia Island is a good place for them.

LEN BUCHANAN

...and Motuara Island

If you want to see South Island Saddlebacks, then Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds is the place to go. In fact it is the only place where the general public can see South Island Saddlebacks in the wild.

In March 1993, 26 birds were transferred to the island from two of the Muttonbird Islands just off Oban, Stewart Island. Since then the original birds have steadily declined from eighteen in the first thorough count, then to eleven, and at the last count just seven of those original birds were present.

However with two very good breeding seasons we have managed to band eighteen new birds, and there are another nine birds yet to be banded. These include two birds in adult plumage, which must be at least three years old. The majority are in the Jackbird plumage, which means they are one or two years old. Although this Jackbird plumage is considered a juvenile plumage, there are two Jackbird pairs on the island.

One bird was seen with food in the bill, but we could not track down a nest with young in it. The other Jackbird pair successfully fledged a single young. The surprising thing about this pair is that they were banded together at the same mist net site on 23 September 1996 within ten metres of our camp and within about two metres of where they nested. The nest was found on 22 November with a single egg, and was in an old tree stump less than a metre above the ground. On about 12 December the chick hatched.

The island is just 59 hectares, and at present there are at least 34 South Island Saddlebacks on it. The current status of the island is historic/scenic reserve, and the general public has ready access to it via a jetty. From here there is a twenty minute walk up a track to Cook's Cairn and the observation tower. Along the way there is a small water seepage, which has been dug out to create a small bathing pool for the birds. The dominant Saddleback pair, which always fledges at least two chicks, has this waterhole within the territory. They are readily seen or heard nearby.

BILL CASH

New Members

The Society would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:

New Zealand - Emily Sancha, Ted & Bev Hanifan, Gaylene Wright, William Greenwood, Timothy Kastle, Janet Vaughan, Margaret Wignall, Karen Baird, Alison Izatt, Denise Gillan, Jeanne Anne Jacob, Mandy Ridley, Clare Washington, Paul Rose, Danny Ross, Bruce Newland, Barry Donovan; **Overseas** - Dr Irvine B. Smith, Jean MacKenzie.

Donations to the Society

Donations to the Society are gratefully accepted. Many thanks to the following people for their donations:

Derrick & Linda Read, Mandy Ridley, Bruce Newland, Kathleen Todd, Barry Hartley, Joy Soper, Ian Sutherland, Barry Friend, Mark Nee, Kim Sherelney, Hugh & Zoe Clifford, G.L. Don, Derek Onley, Ephra Garrett, Mary Craven, George Chance, Dr E.J. Kirk, C.J. Foreman, Margaret A. Fleming, Audrey Eagle, Laurie & Alison Howell, David Pye, Paul & Joy Sagar, M.A. Waller, W.B. Messenger, Mary McEwen, John & Stella Rowe, Anthea Goodwin, Barbara Walter, D.H. & E.L. Booth, Colin Hill.

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary

OSNZ Sale Items

Books

Chatham Islands Ornithology - A Tribute to Sir Charles Fleming 1916-1987 \$15.00

The Black Robin - Saving the world's most endangered bird \$18.00

Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand and the birds of Ross Dependency \$10.00

Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand - an index to *Notornis* 1939-1989 \$10.00

A Flying Start - Commemorating fifty years of OSNZ \$10.00

The Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand - without microfiches \$15.00 with microfiches \$25.00

Beach Patrollers Guide to Stormcast Seabirds \$ 7.00

Birds of the Nelson Region and where to find them \$10.00

Birdwatching in Hawkes Bay \$ 6.00

Miscellaneous

OSNZ Pied Stilt car stickers \$ 3.00

OSNZ metal pin badges \$ 5.50

Tick sheets - pocket checklist of birds in New Zealand \$ 1.00

OSNZ greeting cards - packs of 10 with envelopes, one design (Fantail, Pied Stilt, Bellbird, Tomtit, Tui and Shining Cuckoo) \$ 4.00

Packs of 10 with envelopes - parakeets \$ 4.00

Mixed packs of 10 \$ 4.00

Ordering

Send orders to: OSNZ Sales, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. All prices include GST and packaging. Orders must be accompanied by payment. Make cheques payable to Ornithological Society of NZ. Overseas orders will be charged the same price in US\$ and will be charged for postage. They may be paid by Visa.

DEREK BATCHELER

OSNZ Sales Convenor

Tahiti Petrel - Alive

Though I have seen a spirit specimen of the Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*, a skull from the Musee d'histoire naturelle in Paris, the study skin of a fledgling in Te Papa, the beach wreck from Dargaville and a skull from Gau Island, Fiji, I had not seen a living member of this fascinating genus. Therefore the chance to meet the Tahiti Petrel as an aside during a holiday in French Polynesia was very tempting, and finally realised in 1997.

Philippe Raust of the Societe d'ornithologie de Polynesie, in Papeete, gave me valuable information on where the Tahiti Petrel is known to occur in Moorea, where Miriel and I were to stay for nine days. On 15 August I climbed the track up Mt Rotui to about 600-700 m. As Philippe had told me this was the season for departures of fledglings (July to early October), if Tahiti Petrels were breeding near the track I was ascending there would be signs on the track of the nocturnal activity of fledglings, such as shed down and excretions.

I found sign at about 200 m. (two pieces of white down on a rock, wafting in the breeze), then, at two places, excretions and down affected by the rain of two days before. Interesting that this species seems to have white belly down - most petrels' belly down is grey.

Next, at about 400 m., I found excretions along 10 m. of the track, sure sign of a burrow, with probably a well-fed fledgling nearby. This was easily found, a metre below, to the right of the track. On putting my hand inside I was greeted with the call - "aaooo-wheet-argh" is how I interpreted it, the middle part a whistle, the final part harsh. Jim Jolly, during a visit in 1991, had aptly described the call as reminiscent of a high-pitched version of a Blue Penguin's call.

The bird was an adult in worn plumage with downy incubation patch; small, purplish cloaca; very well worn claws; by its rather small size and docile behaviour, probably a female. I took several photographs. While I held the bird in my day pack, I investigated the burrow further with a stick: there was another bird inside which grunted as I touched it, near the end, about a metre from the entrance. No down adhered to the stick, and the bird felt firm to the touch, so it was mainly feathered rather than down-covered - as I expected if it was a fledgling emerging at night. I could not reach it, so I returned its parent to the burrow. Upon being reunited the adult called again and the presumed fledgling grunted.

My impressions of this species and genus were that it was as like *Procellaria* and as unlike *Pterodroma* as I expected (Imber 1985, *Ibis* 127:197-229). It certainly warrants a distinct genus, but several aspects of its behaviour - eg. the adult calling from the burrow, the chick grunting in the burrow, the docile nature, and reported similarities of behaviour at sea - are very like *Procellaria*. The actual call, given in flight also, is quite distinctive, however.

MIKE IMBER

Ten Days with Gould's Petrel

Gould's Petrel breeds only on Cabbage Tree Island, which is located about 1.4 km off Port Stephens on the NSW coast, about 200 km north of Sydney. This subspecies is the subject of long-term studies and a recovery programme by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. I was fortunate enough to spend ten days working as a volunteer on the project in December 1996.

Cabbage Tree Island is about 26 ha. in area, and its name derives from the cabbage tree palm (*Livistona australis*) which is common in the two main gullies where this petrel nests. The island is designated the John Gould Nature Reserve, and access is strictly controlled.

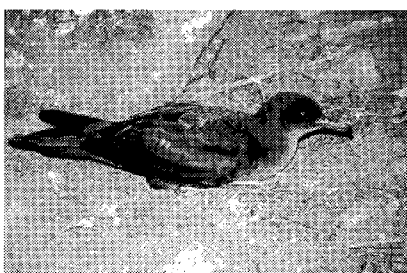
While I was there we worked each night, catching and banding adults. During the day we extracted incubating adults from designated study nests and weighed them daily. This was to determine lengths of incubation spells and daily weight loss - parents take turns incubating. We also set up study plots to monitor vegetation changes which were expected to occur after a planned rabbit eradication. We used spare time for weed control. The work being done while I was there was only a small part of very extensive studies carried out during that breeding season.

Gould's Petrel comes ashore for breeding during October to April, and migrates to the eastern tropical Pacific for the rest of the year. It is a cavity nesting bird, which rather than digging burrows



Gold's Petrel - note the black cap. Only Stejneger's Petrel, of the similar-sized gadfly petrels which might be seen in New Zealand, has this feature.

Photo: Hugh Clifford



Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are a common nesting bird on the island.

Photo: Hugh Clifford

in soil, uses natural cavities, mainly in rock scree, but also in hollow palm logs and under fallen palm fronds.

In earlier studies, the population visiting the breeding colony was estimated to have declined from about 2,000 in 1970 to about 1,500 in 1992. Breeding success was considered to be low. A study of losses of adults and chicks at the colony identified two important causes. One was entanglement in the sticky fruits of the bird-lime tree (*Pisonia umbellifera*), which fall to the ground when ripe and retain their stickiness for months. Adults coming and going during chick feeding brush against them and become incapable of flying. The same thing happens to chicks when they start moving about before fledging.

The other important cause of adult mortality at the breeding colony was predation by the Pied Currawong. The currawongs are members of the same family as Australian magpies and butcherbirds. Though they are omnivorous, they are not well equipped to hold and dismember large prey. However it was found that the Pied Currawong searched among the fallen palm fronds for incubating adults which were under the fronds or in shallow rock crevices.

After killing this prey the currawongs had an ingenious method of holding it while they removed the entrails and flesh to feed to their chicks. They jammed the petrel into a crevice on a fallen tree trunk to hold it, while they tore it apart. Losses from these causes were subsequently reduced by killing bird-lime trees in the areas used by the petrels



Artificial nest box for Gould's Petrel

Photo: Hugh Clifford

and by controlling the numbers of Pied Currawongs.

Another approach to enhancing population recovery has been the development of an artificial nest box. This was done to provide additional nest sites which were secure from predators, protected from bad weather, and which reduced the chances of egg breakage or loss from the nest. These plastic nest boxes, which form only a small proportion of about 800 nesting sites, have been fairly readily accepted. If only all of the birds were in artificial nest boxes how easy it would be to monitor them!

Gould's Petrel is a handsome small petrel and I feel privileged to have been able to work with them for a short time. What chance have we of seeing birds from Cabbage Tree Island around New Zealand? Not much, it would seem. Beach patrollers have reported Gould's Petrels washed ashore on a few occasions, but these have generally been considered to be representatives of the closely related subspecies *caledonica*, which breeds on the main mountain range of New Caledonia.

HUGH CLIFFORD

Petrel Bibliography

A fully keyworded listing of 12,830 papers and books entitled *A Provisional Bibliography of the Procellariiformes or Petrels* is now in the Internet at <http://www.zool.canterbury.ac.nz/jwbibpl.htm>.

It is in ASCII format and intended to be downloaded into users' PCs for searching by their own systems. The work covers published material from Aristotle to 1995 inclusive.

In due course a revised version will incorporate some of the estimated 4,000 citations evidently with data on petrels but not yet seen by me. These will be listed in a "Wants" file at the above address. The finished version will also include indexes tying each keyword to all the citations bearing that keyword - in the style of the *Zoological Record*. The bibliography is available without charge (by me anyway).

JOHN WARHAM
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University Bird Studies

The following is a list of bird studies being conducted by students in New Zealand's universities, with the exception of Victoria University of Wellington, which did not respond. The list was compiled by Euan Young, with the Society's thanks, and is current to September 1997.

University of Otago - Department of Zoology, Professor C.R. Townsend.

Diploma in Wildlife Management

Cees Bevers - investigating the effects of radio transmitters on chicken chicks (*Gallus domesticus*) as an experimental surrogate for endangered Takahe chicks.

Bruce McKinlay - management plan for Yellow-eyed Penguin.

Mohoko Numata - effects of philopatry on the outcome of translocating endangered seabirds.

Masters degree

Angela Bell - interspecific aggression by Australian Magpies.

Petrina Duncan - habitat selection in a remnant population of the South Island Robin, Silverstream Valley, Flagstaff Hill, Dunedin.

Christina Houghton - behavioural ecology of predatory birds at Macraes Flat, Otago (Australasian Harrier, NZ Falcon, Australian Magpie)

Joshua Kemp - production, dispersal and social behaviour of Kea in Nelson Lakes National Park

Martin Renner - parental investment and paternity in Blue Penguins.

Ross Sinclair - the behaviour, ecology and conservation of three species of megapode in Papua New Guinea (New Guinea Megapode *Megapodius affinis*, Brown-collared Talegala *Talegala jobiensis*, Wattle Brush Turkey *Aepyodius arfakianus*), Crater Mount Biological Research Station, PNG

Angus Small - possible cause(s) for low reproductive success of Takahe on offshore islands of New Zealand.

PhD degree

Jacqueline Beggs - the impact of introduced *Vespula* wasps on the honeydew beech forest community, Nelson Lakes National Park

Richard Cuthbert - breeding biology of Hutton's Shearwater, Seaward Kaikoura Mountains

Christine Hunter - population ecology of Sooty Shearwaters - South Island and Stewart Island offshore breeding colonies

Martyn Kennedy - behaviour and phylogeny of New Zealand waterfowl and shags

Jane Kitson - harvest of Titi (muttonbirds) by Rakiura Maori - harvest methods and impacts, katiakitanga, matauranga Maori and ecological science. Stewart Island and Foveaux Strait islands

Philip Lyver - identifying and monitoring impacts of mainland and island colonies of Sooty Shearwaters for their long-term conservation and harvesting, Otago coastline and nearshore islands.

Simon McDonald - wildlife parasitology - Yellow-eyed Penguins and other NZ native species

Lincoln University - Department of Entomology and Animal Ecology, Dr R.R. Scott.

Masters degree

Jonathon Banks - territory use and factors affecting breeding success of South Island Pied Oystercatchers in riparian and pastoral habitat, Ashburton area

Philippa Gardner - conservation biology of Chatham Petrels, Rangatira Island

Mark Jarrett - impact of foraging at rubbish dumps on health and body condition of Kea, Arthurs Pass

Nigel Watkins - bird damage in vineyards, Canterbury

Nicolette Was - Broad-billed Prion and Chatham Petrel burrow competition and other aspects of prion ecology, Rangatira Island

PhD degree

Frances Schmechel - habitat use and breeding biology of Chatham Island Oystercatchers, main Chatham Island

Amanda Freeman - the importance of fisheries waste in the diet of Westland Petrels, Punakaiki

University of Canterbury - Department of Zoology, Professor M.J. Winterbourn.

Masters degree

Patricia Denholm - a temporal and spatial analysis of the invertebrate fauna associated with the deserted nests of the Red-billed Gull, Kaikoura

Andrew Love - wading birds and heron feeding patterns and distribution within the Avon-Heathcote Estuary

PhD degree

Erica Abelen - courtship behaviour and breeding success in female-female pairings in the Red-billed Gull, Kaikoura

Massey University - Department of Ecology, Professor D.M. Lambert.

Masters degree

D. Adams - stress minimisation in captivity managed Kiwi, Massey

R. Berry - release of captive reared Kaka on Kapiti Island

A. Dale - predator-prey dynamics in Te Urewera National Park

R. Davidson - simulating the meta-population dynamics of a reintroduced species, Massey

J. Ewen - breeding biology and management of Hihi (Stitchbirds) on Tiritiri Matangi Island

K. Kesha - the biology of the New Zealand Falcon, Rotorua region

W. Ma - genetic studies of New Zealand robins, Massey

K. McNutt - pollination and dispersal of lowland plants, Kapiti Island and Horowhenua

D. Ravine - impact of farm management practices on kiwi conservation in marginal Taranaki farmland

B. Stephenson - ecology of Moreporks in New Zealand, Mokoia Island

S. Treadgold - breeding biology of the Fairy Tern in Northland

T. Ward-Smith - kiwi response to a range of non-toxic baits, Lake Waikaremoana

M. Welch - corticosterone response to stress capture and handling, and translocation in Blackbirds, Massey

PhD degree

J. Ashton - the evolution of the nestling period in birds, Hawkes Bay

G. Blackwell - predator-prey dynamics in Te Urewera National Park

P. Ritchie - genetics of extinct and ancient Adelie Penguins, Antarctica and Massey

University of Waikato - Department of Biological Sciences, Dr J. Waas.

Masters degree

A. Eagles - effects of acoustic and visual disturbance on the behaviour of Blue Penguins, Tiritiri Matangi and Whale Islands, Banks Peninsula

Q. Hudson - song, fluctuating asymmetries and population genetics of the Kokako, Mapara, Te Urewera, Rotoehu

J. McLeod - the structure of Kokako duets in male-male versus female-female alliances, Mapara, Te Urewera, Rotoehu

G. Reynolds - habitat selection and behavioural responses to disturbance in the New Zealand Dabchick, Rotorua lakes

J-L Slater - social facilitation in begging calls in Zebra Finches, Hamilton

PhD degree

L. Hartley - colour perception and preferences of native New Zealand birds, Pureora, Kapiti Island, Hamilton

University of Auckland - School of Biological Sciences, Professor A.R. Bellamy.

Masters degree

Michelle Green - spatial and temporal use of foraging and breeding habitat by North Island Saddlebacks, Tiritiri Matangi Island

Emma Ross - population and conservation biology of the Common Diving Petrel, Tiritiri Matangi Island

Rosalie Stamp - factors influencing breeding success and parental care patterns of North Island Saddlebacks, Tiritiri Matangi Island

University of Auckland - School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, Dr M.C. Clout

Masters degree

Christina Gibbons - birds as dispersers of weeds, Wenderholm Regional Park

James Haw - ecology and diet of Moreporks, Pureora Forest

Oliver Overdyck - behaviour of translocated Kokako, Hunua Ranges

PhD degree

Astrid Dijkgraaf - phenology of bird-dispersed and bird-pollinated native plants, Auckland region

Rosemary Barraclough - effects of mainland island management on fauna and flora of Te Urewera National Park

Kaka Pie

While searching in the Hocken Library, the following snippet was found in the autobiography of Mrs James Fulton (nee Catherine Henrietta Elliot Valpy) (Hocken Mss.846).

"In about the year 1860 we were for several days invaded by a vast flock of Kakas (Forbury, Dunedin). They must have been starved inland because the birds arrived in great numbers and pulled our grain sacks to pieces. They used to sit in a close row along the ridge board of our barn. To attack them, a man standing on one side of the building would throw a stick up one slope of the roof to knock over the birds. The stick would then be thrown back again by a man on the other side. In that way many birds were killed, besides many others that were shot. People came out from town and took away sacks of them. Fortunately after a week or so the birds left us to look for food elsewhere. Kakas

in moderation are a table delicacy, but we got terribly tired of them."

submitted by C.J.R. ROBERTSON

Questar for sale

The world's finest optics give this Questar 3.5 inch telescope unexcelled resolution and contrast for terrestrial and astronomical use. With leather case, solar filter, legs for tri-mount, two eyepieces (16mm and 24mm). Will mount on car for field use or tripod. Magnifications of 40x, 80x and 160x - \$2,000. Questar rotating coupling adaptor (telescope to camera) \$230. Questar PowerGuide II 9v motor drive (for astronomical observation) \$780. For details call (03) 364 2025 (work) or (03) 332 4806 after 8 pm.

NW Australia Wader Expedition

Tired of holidays at the beach and unreliable weather? Want a holiday with a difference? Then Clive Minton is waiting for your call. Just be willing to spend two weeks to three glorious months basking in the spring warmth of Broome, 80 Mile Beach and Port Hedland in north-west Australia during August, September and October 1998.

North-west Australia is one of the prime locations in the world for waders. It has a peak population of nearly 750,000 waders of 50 species. Special expeditions have taken place over the years, the last being on March /April 1996, when 8,135 waders of 29 species and 357 terns of seven species were caught and banded. Between 1981 and 1996, 51,900 new and retrapped birds were caught.

The objectives of the 1998 expedition are to catch and band waders of many species, also to count and monitor the inward migration. Bush Point on Roebuck Bay will be counted at least once. It is the largest single high tide roost (100,000) for waders on the flyway, and is under threat from diamond exploration.

Rest days? Yes, there will be some. On such days most people still like to do something active, with passerine mist-netting proving the most popular. This is a wonderful opportunity to see some of Australia's lovely bush birds up close. Broome Bird Observatory now has 299 species on its bird list. Number 300 is just waiting for you. Or relax and swim at Cable Beach - the finest beach in Australia?

August and September are the "cool" season (25-30° by day, 15° at night). Dry, with low humidity - perfect weather! October is a bit warmer. There are not many bugs or flies at this time of year.

Wader study experience is not necessary, just a willingness to learn and have a good time with great people from around the world.

For full details on cost etc, contact Adrian Riegen ph/fax (09) 814 9741, or Clive Minton at 165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia, ph/fax 0061 (3) 9589 4901, or email mintons@ozemail.com.au

ADRIAN RIEGEN

The Australian Threatened Bird Network

Do you like seeing birds in Australia? Then what about doing something useful to help some of them? On your next trip across the Tasman you could maybe arrange to spend some time as a volunteer with the Threatened Bird Network, which is run by Birds Australia (formerly the RAOU). I spent 10 days in December 1996 working with Gould's Petrel through that scheme (see this issue).

I have nothing but praise for the extremely prompt and efficient way my application was handled by Birds Australia and by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Taking 1997 as an example, eighteen species are listed in the Threatened Bird Network, with a range of volunteer activities available. These depend on the species, but include things such as counting, monitoring breeding colonies, banding, planting, weed control. The involvement possible depends on each programme, but can be as little as one day, or for longer periods, or at intervals over a whole year.

For more information, contact:

Michael Fendley
Birds Australia
415 Riversdale Road
Hawthorn East
Vic. 3123, Australia.

HUGH CLIFFORD



Rarebits

Saddlebacks - In August Mike McGlynn and Richard Parrish went to Tiritiri Matangi Island to capture North Island Saddlebacks for transfer to Moturoa Island in the Bay of Islands. 27 unbanded birds were caught from roost boxes and in mist nets. All banded birds were left on Tiritiri Matangi.

Moturoa Island occupies 157 ha. in area, is privately owned, and promotes an active conservation programme. Accomplishments to date include a successful stoat and rat eradication project (1994), the creation of several Brown Teal ponds, the retirement of 50 ha. of regenerating coastal forest and the planting of over 35,000 native trees and shrubs.

The island supports established populations of introduced North Island Brown Kiwi and Brown Teal. The owners provided lots of nest and roost boxes for the Saddlebacks prior to release, and will be monitoring the birds with the assistance of Mike McGlynn. Waitangi iwi were present for the release.

Robins and Tomtits - Last year Ralph Powlesland and his team monitored North Island Robin survival through a regional council aerial 1080 carrot operation in Pureora Forest. Almost 55% of the monitored Robins were lost. A report found that the screening of carrot "chaff" was not up to standard and this may have caused the unexpectedly large number of deaths. Successful breeding by the remaining pairs more than made up for the loss, and in a nearby non-treatment area breeding success was very poor.

This year monitoring was repeated at Titiraupenga with both Robins and Tomtits. John Mason and the staff of Pureora Field Centre monitored carrot "chaff" levels in Environment Waikato's operation and the bait was some of the best they'd seen. Of 33 banded Robins, four went missing within days of the aerial operation, while all 42 in the non-treatment area survived. However only three of the 14 Tomtits in the treatment area survived.

It is too early to be certain what the long term impacts on the Tomtit population will be but Tomtits are prolific breeders and where repeated 1080 operations have occurred in the past Tomtits are still common. Monitoring will occur over the next 12 months to determine how long it takes the Tomtit population to recover.

Ralph intends to repeat this monitoring with Robins and Tomtits during an aerial cereal bait operation.

Both the Animal Health Board and the Department are funding on-going research investigating effective bird repellants, alternative baits and control methods and the impacts of these on wildlife.

At Waipapa, where possums and rats are being controlled through use of brodifacoum, two Robins have been tested for brodifacoum residues using a high resolution method run by Landcare. No residues were detected. The population has increased since management began. A few further Robins will be sampled in future years to increase our confidence levels.

Waikaremoana Kiwi - At this stage ten males are incubating a bunch of eggs. Things are a little later than last season but all looks to be shaping up for a bumper hatch. We have caught five stoats and increased the number of traps. Rats and mice are tracking very low, and we are waiting in anticipation for the hatch of the kiwi chicks and arrival of the enemy.

The two chicks reared at Westhore Wildlife Refuge by Tony Billing have been released back on to the peninsula.

Diving petrels - Graeme Taylor has spent a few days in New Plymouth recently to assess the breeding status of diving petrels on Saddleback Island in the Sugar Loaf islands group. This is in preparation for a transfer of near-fledged chicks and non-breeding adults to Mana Island in an attempt to establish a population of diving petrels there. The birds were not as advanced as Graeme had anticipated, delaying the transfer until December.

Kapiti Island - The weekend of 19-21 September saw 22 people descend on the island for a comprehensive survey of the Kokako population. Teams of two found a total of 15 birds, one of which had not been seen since release on the island in 1994. Most of the birds were concentrated in the three central catchments dominated by tawa/hinau/rata forest, and it appears that the island has between four and six male-female pairs and one or two male-male pairs. The population has never had this number of pairs in its six year history, so hopefully it will be a productive breeding season.

This season, Takahe have nested early, with one pair laying in the last week of August. The juvenile male and his two female minders at the south end are still trotting around together, but are showing no signs of breeding activity.

The first anniversary of the poison drop to eradicate rats has passed. The signs are looking good, with plentiful bird song and uneaten fruit on the ground. Large numbers of slugs on tree trunks in the pre-dawn hours are something on a novelty on Kapiti and further evidence of a good operation.

Fiordland Crested Penguins - As part of an on-going study, mid breeding season nest checks at three colonies along the coastline near Haast have been completed. Results were higher than expected, with over 90% of the monitored nests at two colonies producing at least one chick. The other colony was a disaster, with only one adult still incubating an egg. This was down from 20 nests counted during August, and two weeks prior to this count eight nests were still occupied.

The reasons for such a dramatic decline at this site are as yet unknown. The weather has been warm and mild, the adults at the nest site looked in excellent condition and there was no obvious sign of predation of chicks or eggs. The colony is adjacent to a high use walking track, and the Fiordland Crested Penguin is the main focus of the walk at this time of the year, but there is nothing to suggest that this is a causal factor.

Rabbits and river birds - Landcare Research and DoC are working together on a research programme looking at how reductions in rabbit numbers indirectly affect predation rates on native fauna, and the invasion rates of weeds. The work is highly topical because of the recent introduction of RCD, and concerns that predators which currently rely on rabbits will be forced to concentrate their diet on native fauna. This research builds on recent data gathered by DoC, Twizel, that showed increases in predation of Banded Dotterel nests after a rabbit poisoning operation.

The project is centred in the Mackenzie Basin and uses predation of dotterel eggs as an easy-to-measure indicator of the effects of changes in rabbit numbers. We have chosen five 7 km long study sites in the Tekapo, Pukaki, Ohau and Ahuriri Rivers. Landcare Research staff are monitoring rabbits and predators, while two ornithologists, Andrew Crossland and Scott Butcher, are monitoring dotterel nests. At the same time Elaine Murphy, Belinda Studholme and Philippa Gardner are examining the effects of rabbit and predator control on Wrybills and Black-fronted Terns on some of the same study sites. In addition Andrea Byrom will be studying ecological factors that trigger dispersal and settlement of juvenile ferrets, and the foraging patterns of ferrets in relation to monitored dotterel nests.

RCD is apparently killing rabbits on some of our study sites. DoC is therefore required to carry out their RCD Contingency Plan to protect endangered birds from possible prey-switching by killing and trapping predators. Researchers and managers are working closely to minimise unwanted outcomes for the research.

Conservation at Peacock Springs

We are very fortunate in Christchurch to have access to the Peacock Springs reserve at Harewood. In 1965 Sir Neill and Lady Isaac commenced quarrying their original 50 acres of gorse-covered wasteland for shingle, which they gradually increased to 610 acres. The resolve was to simultaneously restore the quarry, much of which has been achieved, as evidenced by the many island-studded ponds and waterways, surrounded by trees and shrubs. These provide excellent cover for nesting waterbirds. Connecting streams flow from one pond to another, eventually discharging into the Waimakariri River.

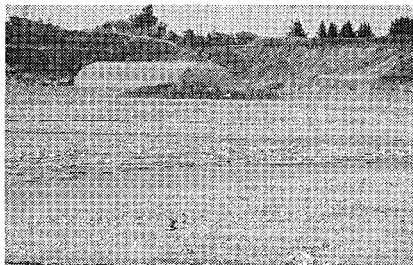
In the late 1960s a family of orphaned NZ Scaup ducklings was presented to Lady Isaac for her care, which provided the nucleus of an ever-expanding number of this species. Their successful breeding, and that of Australian Coots, is undoubtedly greatly enhanced by efficient control of predators such as stoats. Over the years many other exotic species have been introduced, such as Cape Barren Geese, Mute and Black Swans, Chinese Geese and Peafowl. Emus and various exotic animals roam the grasslands of their extensive enclosures, the principle aim of the whole enterprise being to teach conservation to children.

In 1977 a trust was established to allow the reserve to continue in perpetuity. In order to finance the venture, profits from shingle extraction and breeding of salmon were used. In the 1980s Sir Neill became a trustee of the World-wide Fund for Nature. Sadly he died in 1987, leaving Lady Isaac to carry on the good work.

Recently the Department of Conservation has sought the help of Peacock Springs Wildlife Trust in order to captive-breed endangered Shore Plovers for release on Motuora Island. It is a testament to the success of the scheme that nine captive-bred birds were released onto the island this year. It is hoped that Blue Ducks, Brown Kiwi, Orange-fronted Parakeets and Tuatara will also be encouraged to breed. Canterbury Mudfish breed in one of the lakes and are released into the wild.

Recently a further 60 acres of land was acquired by the Trust. High quality shingle has been and still is being extracted, forming a vast depression 40 metres deep. Again there is abundant pure water and a clear stream runs on one side, forming shallow ponds and an ideal habitat for wading birds.

Very quickly birds took advantage of this; Banded Dotterels, South Island Pied Oystercatchers, NZ Scaup, Paradise Shelducks, Pukeko, Pied Stilts and Spur-winged Plovers all nest successfully. A small colony of Black-fronted Terns took up residence and, this season, Black-billed Gulls nested. The latter two species



The newly created scrape at Peacock Springs, with Black-billed Gulls. Shore Plovers are being captive-bred in the enclosure at rear.

Photo: Don Hadden

do not nest on the nearby lower Waimakariri, probably as a result of large colonies of Black-backed Gulls which occupy much of the riverbed.

The terns and gulls chose this site despite heavy machinery engaged in shingle extraction in one corner of the ponds. If they return next year it is hoped that local members will make a more detailed study, including feeding and care of chicks and interaction with other species. By this time Black Stilts will have been introduced into a large enclosure as part of the captive breeding programme.

There are plans for further acquisition of land at Peacock Springs and more ideas for conservation of endangered and threatened species. Native forest plantations are planned, in order to provide habitat for some of our rare forest birds.

I wish to thank Lady Isaac and her staff for their support in conducting our monthly counts of scaup and coots during the past few years, and also for allowing me to monitor the new colonies of terns and gulls. We are very pleased that Lady Isaac is a member of the Society and takes a keen interest in our work.

SHEILA PETCH

Regional Roundup

Northland

Meetings of the Northland branch have been well attended. We have had slides of the Kermadec Islands which were especially relevant since one of our members is now over there, working for DoC for a year. We have also seen a new DoC video on the New Zealand Dotterel and one on the Kokako.

Banding Silvereyes feeding in the kiwifruit orchard was continued this year, under the guidance of Ray Pierce. One calm sunny morning we were treated to the sight of 17 Tui all bouncing about in the flowering kowhai tree and Chinese lantern bushes nearby. Six hardy souls gathered in inclement weather to learn

how to undertake mapping squares under Tony Beauchamp's direction, until the weather cleared and made for a most interesting day.

Beach patrols on the east and west coasts are continuing as usual, with good numbers of people participating. More species and higher numbers of birds are being found as Buller's and Sooty Shearwaters return from their migration. A very exciting recovery on 11 October on the west coast was an albatross skeleton with a metal band from the British Museum on the leg. We are eagerly awaiting a reply from the Banding Office. David Crockett has been working on the Taiko project on Chatham Island during October, when five unbanded birds were banded and had transmitters attached.

About 30 Cattle Egrets have been seen in two different flocks, both lots being fairly highly coloured. The Fairy Terns in the Waipu and Mangawhai areas are being constantly monitored by a few dedicated members and DoC staff. Nesting Caspian Terns, Variable Oystercatchers and New Zealand Dotterels are also at Mangawhai.

Members are looking forward to the Whangarei/Kaipara Harbours census in mid November and the Far North surveys in late November. To round off activities for 1997 we are going to refine techniques learnt from Tony for mapping squares for birds, before our annual end of year barbecue.

(Janet Snell)

Auckland

Recent meetings have been well attended, in response to some exceptional speakers and presentations, and in spite of threats to our historical association with Auckland Museum as a venue. Alan Tennyson delivered an outstanding and well illustrated presentation on Pitt Island in the Chathams. How bird numbers have declined, even in such remote places, is a depressing business, although there are some remarkable exceptions, such as the success of the Broad-billed Prion.

Tim Lovegrove spoke of his adventures in Mauritius and the attempts to save the Pink Pigeons and their indigenous Ring-necked Parakeet. Gerald Durrell would have been proud of the innovation, humour and successes achieved by Tim and the international team of conservation workers.

Gwenda Pulham spoke of terns, mainly Fairy Terns, that she and others have been studying in the Kaipara and eastern beaches to the north of our region. The terns seem to be progressing moderately well and have attracted media interest which one hopes will contribute to their success.

Field activities include the beach patrols on Muriwai where, after a very quiet winter, bird numbers have been increasing. One of the attractions of beach patrolling is the possibility of finding a

banded bird. This year we have found a wrecked Caspian Tern that was banded on the Kaipara as a juvenile over the January summer camp.

Chris Bindon has taken teams to Motuora Island to help with the re-forestation programme and to keep tabs on the Shore Plovers. Mike Graham takes a team of 16 members out to Tiritiri Matangi Island for the biannual survey - a project now into its 11th year.

The Shining Cuckoos reached us in two waves, the first around 15 September and the second about ten days later. John Dowding reported the first New Zealand Dotterel's nest on 27 August, and Kaka arrived in Cornwall Park on 27 September. They were still there in early November.

At Mangere, Ray Clough reported 46 spoonbills at peak season, and we have many records now of a similar number of Rainbow Lorikeets living in the Northcote region. The birds are aviary releases and have been establishing themselves in the wild over the past few years.

(Mike Graham)

South Auckland

Despite the early start for the Firth of Thames census, there was still a good turnout and all areas were covered. On a glorious fine day, the godwit and knot population seemed to be concentrated on two main roosts at opposite corners of the Firth. Numbers of godwits and knots were down on previous years' figures, though it appears the godwits might have had a good breeding season, as there were many juveniles easily distinguished among the flocks.

Paul Rose had the find of the day with two Arctic Skuas - no doubt the increase of White-fronted Terns in the Firth brought them closer to land. They have been seen flying over the shellbanks in recent years.

Bitterns are also being sighted regularly, not only outside the Miranda Shorebird Centre but further along the coast as well. Three Cattle Egrets have apparently decided to stay for the summer and are presently residing in the Piako area. Other Firth sightings include 42 Wrybills, 20 Asiatic Whimbrels, three Pacific Golden Plovers, two Red-necked Stints, two smudgy stilts and 10 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

The September Tiritiri Matangi trip was once again well supported and enjoyed by all. The summery day on Saturday allowed excellent views of all birds and night time activity wasn't to be missed either, with Blue Penguins on beaches, Grey-faced Petrels in flight and in burrows, and Little Spotted Kiwi calling throughout the night. What was most noted by those on a return visit was the spectacular rate of growth of the trees on the island.

The recently released Kokako were very quiet and secretive - a fleeting glimpse was the only view had. However, a long-time resident Weka was seen and still survives, causing many birds great alarm as it moved through the undergrowth. The 17 minute return trip provided a good view of a large number of Fluttering Shearwaters.

Recent reports of Kaka moving through the South Auckland area are encouraging and continue to delight both local residents and avid birders. More reports of Bellbirds around the Hunua Ranges suggests that this species is doing well and has probably benefited from the reduction in pests with the aid of 1080 in the past season or two.

The discovery of two New Zealand Dotterel breeding sites not previously known near Auckland city boundaries has sparked some new interest of late. Both sites are about a kilometre inland, allowing for easy access and observations.

A flock of 12 Royal Spoonbills has been sighted recently at Port Waikato; also a Little Tern, this species not having been recorded previously from this area.

The arrival at Miranda of a Black-billed Gull banded during the Kaipara field study course (one of only five birds) has added some valuable data to our study, and we look forward to the coming breeding season.

Monthly beach patrols have continued, with a steady stream of wrecks. There was a larger than usual number of diving petrels picked up in August (18), and in September there were the expected Kerguelen and Cape Petrels, with Sooty Shearwaters being the top November wreck.

Evening meetings have included expert tuition on how to read and record map coordinates, five minute bird count techniques, as well as instructions on recording moult, compliments of David Lawrie and Tony Habraken. In October, Pam and Des Agnew showed slides of a recent trip through the Tuamotu archipelago and Marquesas Islands, and in November we were treated to an excellent talk by Tim Lovegrove about his work in Mauritius on the critically endangered Echo Parakeet.

(Tony Habraken)

Waikato

Strong south westerly winds over the spring months have brought good numbers of seabirds to our beaches.

Kaka sightings have been frequent throughout the winter, with three seen feeding on kahikatea berries in Ngatea on 23 April (A. Wright), one in Cambridge in April (K. Charland), three at Kerepehi feeding on fruit in June; they were joined by a fourth and remained until August (R.H. Boreham), two feeding on *Paulownia* at Pokura in early July (L. Hoverd), and seven at Orini in native bush in August.

A black Fantail was seen by the Piako River south of Waitoa on 10 May. Numerous Tui were found feeding on kowhai at Raglan Beach on 16 September. The first Shining Cuckoo was heard in Hamilton on 17 September, and a single Rook was sighted at Roto-o-rangi in September. Cattle Egrets were counted in August, with 180 at Rangiriri and 36 at Lake Ngारoto.

In August we were brought up to date with the lives of North Island Robins at Pureora by Jaap Knechtmans, who described the three species of robin found in New Zealand, and Fiona Bancroft, who told us about how the team worked with the robins, how territories were located and mapped and how they trained birds to take meal worms and respond to tapping by observers. Fiona also described means of capture for banding, before going on to tell us about the robins' courtship and behaviours throughout the breeding season. Ralph Powlesland rounded off the evening by explaining the predator control programmes and comparing results with a non-controlled area.

In September we were treated to another look at the animals and birds of South Africa, when Kim King showed slides of her trip through Kruger National Park. We then went to the other extreme in October, when Hugh Clifford showed an amazing variety of birds and landscapes in Iceland.

A weekend in Pureora was enjoyed by a small group who saw the robin team at work, and were also treated to sightings of other bush birds, including Kokako. Only the brave ventured to Port Waikato for another weekend in October, to view shorebirds.

(Bev Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

A fine winter day was well attended in July for a visit to Matata Lagoons and the Tarawera and Rangitaiki rivermouths in July. Highlights included Black-fronted Terns. August saw a visit to "Wingspan", the bird of prey centre in Rotorua. Topics of an interesting talk by Debbie Stewart-Badger included behaviour of the New Zealand Falcon, Morepork and Australasian Harrier. A visit to Lake Tamarenuui in October was unfortunately a washout and will be rescheduled. 41 species have been seen at this lake over the past three years.

Kerry Oates from Ohakune has taken up the position of Regional Representative for the Volcanic Plateau region, previously amalgamated with Bay of Plenty. We wish Kerry well with his new appointment, and warmly welcome members to participate in field activities in our region.

The Department of Conservation has recently carried out restoration work on the Matata Lagoons. The lagoons are situated in the Matata Wildlife Management Reserve. Previously they

were part of a channel to the sea formed by the Tarawera and Rangitaiki Rivers, and in the early days were a port, with shipping for transporting flax from the local mills. In 1916 realigning and stop-banking were carried out to give the present, direct access for the rivers into the sea, leaving the joint river course cut off from river flows. Infilling and plant growth have resulted in their present condition.

The lagoons are silting up rapidly from two streams which flow into them, and are also being invaded by raupo. Since 1940 one third of the open surface of the lagoons has disappeared and the depth has reduced by half.

The restoration work was made possible through a support fund of \$150,000 from the Tasman Pulp and Paper Co. and additional funding from the Department of Conservation. Work included removal of large areas of raupo, construction of silt traps at the stream inlets, spraying of raupo and weeds, dredging and landscaping and planting of flaxes and other native plants. It is believed that if the restoration work had not been done the lagoons would disappear within five years.

We are looking at publishing a locality guide to the birds of the Bay of Plenty, along the lines of those produced for Nelson and Hawkes Bay.

(John Brierley)

Taranaki

The September trip was to the Rerekaka Track in the Moki Forest, when members of the New Plymouth Tramping Club joined our group. The usual forest birds were seen, plus two Fernbirds in a small swamp area near the track entrance.

A lone Royal Spoonbill, frequently seen in the lower Waitara River valley, seems to have moved on early in September. Diving petrels, Fluttering Shearwaters and Flesh-footed Shearwaters are still active around the Sugar Loaf Islands of the marine park. On Motu-o-Tamatea Island at least eight Grey-faced Petrel chicks were seen late in September, and there were 60-80 breeding burrows at that time.

A few Banded Dotterels remain at the Waiongana River mouth. The first godwit for the season was seen in this area on 21 September. Small flocks of up to 20 have been seen since. A few days later, three Turnstones arrived. Other visitors to this area later in September include Pacific Golden Plovers, Lesser Knots and Wrybills. On 7 September a pair of New Zealand Dotterels were at the mouth of the Punganeene Stream, Rahutu area.

At the October meeting it was recorded that the first Shining Cuckoo of the season was heard at Mokau. More Eastern Rosellas have been seen in the Okato district; this is as well as those recorded as being in the Mokau/

Mohakatina areas. Two Kaka have been seen in gardens close to bush reserves around Barrett Lagoon, at different times during September and October.

The October monthly trip was an outing to the Waitaanga South Road forest area. Members of Forest and Bird joined our group for the day. 19 bird species were recorded, the most numerous being NZ Robins (6 seen and 25+ heard).

Frequent sightings of three Cattle Egrets may indicate that they are to spend the summer in the Waiongana River mouth area. Early in October a Shy Albatross was found in a distressed condition at New Plymouth's Back Beach. Sadly the bird had to be put down. The most exciting wader to be found at the Waiongana River mouth to date was an Asiatic Whimbrel. Peter, our newest member, has been visiting the river mouth almost daily, and is able to give an accurate record of local and migratory waders which perhaps would not be seen on occasional visits.

The year's first Long-tailed Cuckoo was seen and heard on the Moki Forest on 29 October. A large flock of Greenfinches was seen in a coastal paddock late in October and a few days later in the same area - 80% of a mixed flock of finches appeared to be Greenfinches. Red-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns are settling in on the nesting sites in the marine park. We hope the birds have a successful breeding season.

At the November meeting members discussed the late flocking of Greenfinches this season in some coastal areas, and had a close look at a mounted Barn Owl. The bird was found dead in a New Plymouth street a few years ago and is now in the museum collection. The November trip will be to the Waiongana River mouth where we hope to see a variety of wader species.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Manawatu

On 1 August a Cape Pigeon flew north, close inshore, at Foxton Beach. This is a pretty rare bird on our coast. A Kaka apparently spent the winter in suburban Feilding. I saw it in June and again on 9 August - and DoC had other reports.

Waders are building up nicely at the Manawatu Estuary. Just under a hundred Bar-tailed Godwits on 20 September increased to 500+ by 18 October. Red Knots were up to 185+ by 4 November, one carrying a yellow leg flag from north-western Australia. We had an early Red-necked Stint on 20 September, and another two on 4 November.

What is presumably a returning Grey-tailed Tattler was back on 10 October - the tenth consecutive summer that this species has been present. One Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - also from 10 October - was joined by another two on the 9th,

and there were 22 Pacific Golden Plovers by 2 November, a welcome 50% increase on last year's maximum. Eight Turnstones on 9 November is a pretty good count for here, and particularly pleasing was an Eastern Curlew on 18 and 25 October - this species was regular up until the early 90s, but this is the first for several years. A Little Tern was present on 23 October.

In the last twelve months the estuary of the Manawatu River has had 11 (or maybe 12) species of Arctic waders - in addition to those above, we had Great Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and a possible Mongolian Dotterel last summer. We may not be able to rival Miranda in numbers, but we certainly do in variety of waders, and all this from just a handful of observers at this terribly under-watched hot spot.

Come on folks! Get down to the Manawatu to see all these birds at incredibly close range - and please give me a call on (06) 323 1441 to let me know what else you find.

(Ian Saville)

Wellington

Over the last few months our evening meetings have taken us to many parts of the world. With Russell Thomas we visited the southern-most part of South America, Patagonia - a sparsely populated area of wild countryside. Jean-Claude Stahl took us to the Southern Ocean and the Snares and Solander Islands. He has been working with Southern Buller's Mollymawks, looking at population sizes, diets, and the relationship between the fishing industry and the birds. November brought us Ricardo Palma with his enthusiastic account of lice and their relationship with birds. Many species of lice are so host-specific that a bird can be identified by the lice living on it.

Field trips have included an excursion to Mana Island, where another robin's nest was found with two chicks. Counts in Karori Reservoir have continued. The project is just waiting for final planning approval, then the predator-proof fence will begin to be erected.

Planning for the AGM is well underway - please read all the information in this *OSNZ News* and make your bookings early. We look forward to seeing as many as possible of you in May/June for a great weekend in the capital city.

(Ros Batcheler)

Canterbury

It's been all go here recently in Canterbury. At the moment the Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern survey is underway. The aerial portion was completed on 9 November, and now the follow-up work will be continued on foot and by boat. All the rivers south of Kaikoura were flown to locate nesting colonies - over five hours of flight time.

A large colony of Black-billed Gulls has taken up residence at Peacock Springs. There are over 600 nests being monitored. When the chicks are large enough (around the end of November or beginning of December) they will be rounded up and banded. A few Black-fronted Terns, Pied Stilts and Banded Dotterels are also nesting in the area.

Over Labour Weekend there was a joint field trip with Otago members to Twizel and the Mackenzie region. 18 members enjoyed the trip, with reports of good weather along with a variety of birds, including breeding Wrybills and Black Stilts, and, at Lake Alexandrina, 57 Southern Crested Grebes and 13 Australian Coots.

In July members enjoyed stunning surroundings while participating in the 14th annual winter census of birds of the Ashburton lakes.

Over the next few weeks, additional activities will include the annual summer wader count on 6 and 7 December of the Avon-Heathcote and Ashley Estuaries, bays around Banks Peninsula, and Lake Ellesmere, followed by a barbecue. Interesting sightings have included a mystery bird at Lake Ellesmere. For the moment it's been designated a Long-toed Lesser Sandstint (it's either a Long-toed Stint or a Least Sandpiper). After making several appearances it has disappeared for a while. A Sanderling in juvenile plumage was seen near the mouth of the Ashley River. The two hybridising pairs of oystercatchers are breeding again this year near the mouth of the Ashley, and three chicks have been leg flagged.

The Canterbury branch was pleased to present to Marg Davis the Phil Howell Trophy for 1997/98 at the November monthly meeting. Marg has been a member of OSNZ since 1953, and has been involved in a wide variety of interesting field projects. Congratulations, Marg, and thanks for all your contributions.

Presentations at the evening meetings have included information from a study looking into the effects of tourism at the White Heron colony at Okarito by Graeme Hickling, Lincoln University. It appears that the current level of tourism is affecting use of the lower river, especially by younger birds, but does not appear to be impacting on nesting. This research also revealed that opinions sometimes shift to suit the circumstances. In August, Philippa Gardner, also at Lincoln University, shared information from her research on Rangatira/South East Island into the causes of the decline on the threatened Chatham Petrel. Competition for nesting burrows with Broad-billed Prions is the main cause of chick loss - over half of the chicks may be killed by prions in any one year. In September Mark Sanders from the Department of Conservation in Twizel presented information on Black Stilt management and research in the

Mackenzie Basin, and in November Frances Schmechel, Lincoln University, reported on the Chatham Island Oystercatcher and some of the issues involved with conservation on the Chathams in general. She also showed slides of how territorial pairs will attack a variety of cardboard models, often knocking them to the ground.

(Frances Schmechel)

Otago

El Nino has had an effect on our activities. Trying to do a count of the waders on exposed mudflats in gale force winds, with hail and heavy rain, isn't easy. Trying to catch robins at Flagstaff Hill in a blizzard can create similar problems. Thanks to the nine members who braved the weather.

Some work has been done on the gull and tern survey. Malcolm Foord noticed a colony on the Clutha River on 20 November. There were approximately 700 flying birds, and nesting was observed, though access was not possible. The sad tale was the flushing of Lake Roxburgh over the weekend - emptying part of the lake over a period of 48 hours meant that the river was up about a metre, with the result that all the gulls disappeared. A pity, since this was the first sighting of breeding gulls there for over ten years. The Waitaki River has been surveyed, with three colonies.

A large colony of White-fronted Terns at the Waitaki mouth was counted, or rather estimated, since it was impossible to count properly. This is the first colony for many years. Four Turnstones near the mouth were an uncommon sighting. Black-fronted Terns are everywhere on the river, with a good number of fledglings counted.

Frank Austin reports an albino Goldfinch alongside the old Dunstan Road on 27 October. "It was completely white except for a gold bar on the wing, a red face and brown breast". Kim Morrison saw a full albino male among eight House Sparrows in Dunedin in October.

The Otago Science Fair attracted seven entries on bird projects, up from the usual one or two, which is most pleasing. Highly commended were Soren Miller with her entry "Waxeye Winter Blues" and Hamish Walker with "Birdies Banquet". The winner was Matthew Cornelissen with his entry "Bird's Eye View". All three projects were studies of Silvereyes!

A Tui census of the botanical gardens took place on 6 September. Final score - Tuies 27 - Birders 4.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland

Our most recent indoor meeting looked at flightless birds. We had the rare opportunity to examine and dissect a

fairly fresh kiwi. We were surprised by the minute wings and the tiny, flat sternum, apparently unconnected to the ribs.

A flock of nine Glossy Ibis has taken up residence in pasture beside Waikawa Harbour. Cattle Egret numbers are well down in Southland this year, with only a few dozen compared with the hundreds of last year. We are currently part way through our aerial counts of Black-billed Gulls on the Oreti, Mataura, Aparima and Waiau Rivers. At this stage it looks like numbers are down on previous years.

A survey of the Aparima River revealed only one Black-fronted Dotterel, although there were around a hundred Banded Dotterels along the same stretch of river. There is a falcon resident on Queen's Park, Invercargill. It has been seen terrorising the aviary birds and White-faced Herons in the park. A pair of Little Owls is resident in the *macrocarpas* outside the museum - they call frequently during the day.

There is a good number of spoonbills on Omaui Island. There are always a few visible on the estuary at any time. A Rook was reported from Doughboy Bay on Stewart Island. Recent beach patrols have produced Broad-billed Prions, diving petrels, Mottled Petrels, Blue Petrels, Cape Pigeons, Magpies and Stewart Island Shags.

(Lloyd Esler)

Chatham Islands

Being surrounded by the Southern Ocean, spring birdwatching in the Chathams has once again been strongly focused on seabirds. The Black Shag census has been completed; a total of 373 breeding pairs in five colonies were counted. Although the overall number of colonies has decreased by two since the last full census in 1961, the number of pairs has nearly doubled. A census of both Pitt and Chatham Island Shags is due to be completed by the end of November.

Larger seabirds have been providing some interesting observations lately. A Grey-headed Mollmawk was found on Waitangi beach; other than this the beaches have been casting up very little. A juvenile Black-browed Mollmawk was seen at sea off Port Hutt. At Te Matarea, a beach off the Te Whanga Lagoon, a banded Wandering Albatross was found dead.

Members of the Chatham Island Taiko expedition have been kept busy at the light site on the Tuku River. To date six Taiko have been caught and had transmitters fitted. Along with the usual collection of storm petrels (White-faced and Grey-backed) and prions (Broad-billed and Fairy), a Juan Fernandez Petrel has been seen and a Soft-plumaged Petrel caught. Both species are irregularly caught in the Chathams.

(Mike Bell)

What's On



Northland/Far North

24, 25, 26 January - Far North lakes. Ph. Janet Snell (09) 438 4240.

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

22 - 23 February - Pouto Lakes survey, 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



South Auckland



Waikato

Evening meetings, third Wednesday of the month (except January), DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751 for all activities.

18 February - evening meeting - Members' night - bring slides and photos.

21 February - Waders at Kidds Farm, Manukau.

18 March - evening meeting and AGM - Birds of Paradise.

21-22 March - Kaka at Waipapa

Monthly beach patrols of west coast beaches and Mt Karioi 5 minute counts. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 856 3891

Hamilton Lake counts - 2nd Sunday of the month. Ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729.

Bay of Plenty

18 January - beach patrol, Ohiwa Harbour to Waiotahi River. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

15 February - Robins at Mt Edgecumbe. Ph. John Brierley.

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Wellington

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Mapping scheme - Hugh Roberston (04) 385 8407.

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

Nelson

Marlborough

Canterbury

14 February - bush areas on Banks Peninsula, Ph. Kathleen Harrison (03) 322 9699.

24 February - evening meeting, Middleton Grange School, Riccarton. AGM and members' night. Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 348 1889.

West Coast

Otago

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

6 February - Royal Spoonbill census of coastal Otago. Ph. Peter Schweigman.

Southland

Beach patrols - most Friday evenings. Ph. Lloyd Esler (03) 213 0404.

Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern survey - many areas still to cover. Ph. Lloyd Esler.

DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH ISSUE IS 10 FEBRUARY