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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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Tahiti Monarch Flycatcher

OSNZ has previously provided financial assistance for members working in Rarotonga to assist in conservation of the Kakerori (*Pomarea dimidiata*). Readers will be familiar with Hugh Robertson's accounts of this work and how rat control has allowed numbers to rise from c.30 to c.150 in less than a decade.

During September and October I was able to visit Tahiti to assess the situation with another monarch flycatcher *P. nigra*. Only three other species still survive in this genus, all of which are on the Marquesas group of French Polynesian islands.

The Tahiti Monarch Flycatcher was common in forested areas of the island last century but has undergone a dramatic decrease, some of which has been well documented even during the last two decades. Working with a resident French biologist, Caroline Blanvillain, we located approximately 17 birds, all of which were in lowland valleys - effectively four separate populations, none of which comprised more than two pairs. Only one of these birds was in juvenile plumage, suggesting that there has been little recruitment for the species over recent years.

The forest habitat was startlingly different from Rarotonga, as it is largely composed of introduced invasive species, such as the African tulip tree, and was usually confined to a narrow strip along the floor of steep basalt canyons. One of these canyons, which held two pairs and one or two single birds, has been subjected to an intensive rat control programme initiated by Jean-Claude Thibault and Te Manu, the French Polynesian Ornithological Society. This will hopefully determine whether rat control holds the potential to avert extinction for this species.

Unfortunately nesting in this valley and elsewhere has so far been characterised by birds abandoning their nests

at an early stage. One pair had built five nests by early November. It has been suggested that disturbance from introduced species, such as the Common Myna and Red-vented Bulbul, may be more significant than first suspected.

PETER GAZE

Ornithological Flocks

- the 22 International Ornithological Congress, Durban, South Africa, 16-22 August 1998.

"We have sorted out the laser pointers, and you will not need to pay 150 rand (about \$40) per session to use them after all". The crowd gave a collective sigh of relief in sympathy for the speakers and presenters. It did seem a rather high price to pay, especially since the cost of registering for the conference was about \$1600 (which included a nice green bag, the abstracts from the talks, and cups of coffee at the breaks). And so Aldo Berruti, the Secretary-General of this year's IOC, once again triumphed in spite of the many hurdles organising such an event must throw up - especially in South Africa. He did say something about how, although he was glad to see it finally coming together, if he had to do it all over again - he wouldn't.

You could hardly blame him. Although it was obvious from many comments made that the South African ornithological community was very pleased to be part of the world community once again after their long period of isolation, it was also obvious that when anything goes wrong the chairman hears about it, and not always in the most polite manner.

A few things did go wrong. Turners, a company contracted to cover all the travel arrangements, seemed unprepared for the task they had taken on. Long queues were always snaking around their desk. Pre-conference communications often seemed to disappear into a black

hole. To their credit, whenever I had to deal with them they were always very polite when I finally did get a response.

The podiums, in this huge, modern conference centre where the congress was held, seemed to have a mysterious array of buttons or menus which continually baffled and foiled even the most practised and prepared speakers. Right up until the last day, room lights and slides seemed to be run by a mischievous computer with a mind of its own. The lights and slides would be flicking on and off in a seemingly random pattern, while the speakers glared at panels, punched buttons, looked around and muttered.

A couple of days before the event had concluded, the government saw fit to erect concrete carriers all around the centre, in preparation for a large meeting of non-aligned nations. It was excellent fodder for jokes. Aldo was not impressed. In spite of the challenges, he managed to keep a good sense of humour, and I always looked forward to his South African accent and dry wit during the daily announcements.

Similar to past congresses, over one thousand delegates attended. Some of the delegates at the Durban IOC were still talking about the Christchurch conference, which seems to have set the standard for IOC congresses ever since. Unique to this congress, the proceedings will be published only on CD Rom, not on paper.

Thanks in part to a generous grant from the NZ Ornithological Congress Trust Board, I was able to present a poster on my work on the Chatham Island Oystercatcher. Unfortunately my allotted space was in a very out of the way corner, so the visitor volumes seemed low while I was standing near the poster. I felt a bit like a sales person trying to appear like I belonged with the poster, was friendly and helpful, but not too pushy. I was pleased to hear later that someone had seen the poster and remembered it.

There were hundreds of other posters on myriads of topics. It was good *fun making it a goal to visit all the other posters in the session.* I was impressed, not only with the amazing types of research going on all around the world, but also with the variety of ways one can present a poster. New Zealand made a good showing at the congress, with about ten other posters, all of impressively high quality.

Besides the challenges of visiting all the other posters, there was also the daunting task of choosing which symposia, talks and workshops to attend. Fortunately the sessions were reasonably concurrent, so it was possible to move from session to session (which I did frequently). In addition to the main IOC in Durban, I also attended and presented a paper at a satellite conference in Cape Town (the International Wader Study Group conference). Both were excellent sources of important, though informal, information - current ornithological research - and the people and thinking behind that research.

One of the most remarkable plenary sessions was by Nick Davies, on cuckoos and their hosts. He presented a slide of a small host species feeding an enormous (probably three times its size) cuckoo chick and shared how, at the beginning of his research career, he wanted to know why this bird was acting so stupidly. He then shared a remarkable series of experiments and models which he and others had used to answer that question. It turns out that the risk of accidentally rejecting your own eggs (or chicks) can outweigh the risks of occasionally raising a cuckoo chick. There appears to be a bit of an evolutionary arms race between cuckoos and their hosts. Those host species with a long history of parasitism by cuckoos are much more discerning about strange eggs in their nests, and those cuckoos lay extraordinarily similar-looking eggs to the hosts. Using a model on the risk of a bird accidentally rejecting one of its own eggs, they made some predictions and then tested them. One of these included proving that, if a host bird sees a cuckoo near its nest, it is much more likely to expel eggs or desert the nest, presumably because the risk of having been parasitised is much higher.

Some other interesting tidbits that captured my imagination long after I'd returned from Durban included a presentation by T.C. and J.M. Williams about the migrations of shorebirds across the western Pacific Ocean, which probably represent the longest known migrations over a hostile environment. The data suggest that several species make a flight of up to 7,500 kms over open water. Species such as the Bar-tailed Godwit, which migrate from Alaska to New Zealand, may be using true bi-coordinate migration which enables them to compensate for being blown off course. How do they do it??

Another interesting fact that emerged from a symposium entitled "Predation by birds on tidal flats" was the significance of nocturnal feeding by waders (by Klaus-Michael Exo). 93% of all waders forage at night as well as during the day (and many use different methods to forage at night, eg tactile instead of visual). Of direct relevance to my studies was a paper by Durwyn Liley presenting results of research and modeling into the effects of disturbance (and effective loss of nesting habitat) on the population dynamics of a shore nesting bird, the Ringed Plover in the UK. Disturbance, by preventing birds from nesting in certain areas, can have a significant impact on a species' population.

Unrelated to my research, but absolutely enthralling, was some of the work done in the area of exploratory behaviour in birds. In a symposium led by Hans Winkler and Bernd Leisler, several fascinating papers were given on how birds respond to new objects in their environment. A study by Russell Greenberg of two closely related species revealed how one species (a habitat generalist) was more curious about new objects than the other (a habitat specialist), and even as young chicks the habitat specialist showed a highly stereotyped order of preference for exploring different objects, an order that was very similar even between individuals raised with no contact with others of the same species.

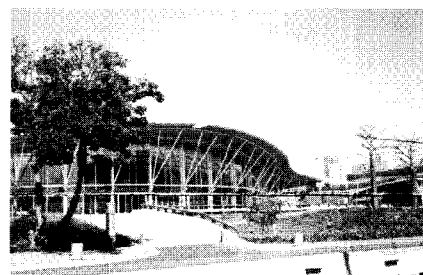
In other experiments by P.J. Drent and C. Marchetti, individual Great Tits were found to have certain personality types (which were heritable to some degree, ie. about 50-60%). The two types were labelled "fast" and "slow". The "fast" personalities were bold explorers in a new environment, bold against strange objects and predators, and aggressive against new rivals. Two strains of personalities were bred for, and from these they discovered that the "fast" personalities started searching for food relatively late in a new environment, and if food sources disappeared they tended to steal food from successful birds or copied their searching behaviours. In contrast, "slow" personalities were thorough and shy explorers, quickly searching for food in a new environment and if the food supply diminished were quick to start searching elsewhere. They normally did not steal food or copy other successful birds.

On the personal side, Durban turned out to be an interesting city. Much larger and more industrial than I had expected, with both a huge port and also extensive and highly developed beaches. The youth hostel where I stayed was in an older, inner-city type of district complete with a nightclub just next door and some quirky local characters. South Africa has a high crime rate, and most of the buildings (including the youth hostel) have razor wire around the perimeters and bars on the doors and windows. In spite of that, people were generally very friendly and helpful. One of the staff at

the youth hostel, a young local fellow, who went by the nickname of Tornado, took an interest in our birding activities and came out with us one morning. He shared with us some of the Zulu names for the birds and demonstrated the local handshake. Unfortunately many of the local African people, even those providing guided birding tours in the parks, have no access to binoculars or field guides.

After the conference I toured the area with another New Zealand student delegate, Brent Stephenson, plus a couple of others. The variety of birds was amazing. In less than two weeks we saw between 200-300 species of birds in just one province (Kwazulu-Natal). In spite of all the human pressures on the land, there are some active conservation projects underway and a good system of national parks. The ornithological scene in South Africa is very active, with a high level of participation and publication by both professionals and amateurs. The level of cooperation between ornithologists and birders of all levels was inspiring to see.

FRANCES SCHMECHEL



I.C.C. Conference Centre, Durban, South Africa, location of 22nd IOC conference.



On left Walter Bock permanent Sec. IOC 22nd IOC President for 23rd IOC. Right Aldo Berutti Sec-General of Durban Conference.



On left Zheng Guang-Mei Pres. China Ornithological Society. Right Weishu Hsu V-P, China Ornithological Society and Sec-General of 23rd IOC.

All photos by C.J.R. Robertson

The Ornithological Society of
New Zealand (Inc)

Nominations for Council

Under the provisions of the new Constitution, the following Council members retire in May 1999, and nominations for a three year term are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created by:

Ms K-J Wilson (South Island Vice-President)

Miss C.E.M. Reed (co-opted Secretary)

Extra ordinary vacancy

Mr D. Onley

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1999, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1999 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1999 in writing and must be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1999 OSNZ Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Christchurch on Saturday 5 June 1999.

Christine Reed
Hon. Secretary
P.O. Box 12397
Wellington

Conference and AGM 1999

Christchurch, 5-7 June

Plans are well advanced for the Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand in Christchurch over Queen's Birthday weekend 5-7 June 1999. The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 5 June starting at 8 pm. The weekend will be a special occasion, marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

Venue and accommodation

The venue is the Ngaio Marsh Function Centre, Students' Association Building, University of Canterbury. Accommodation is available at the nearby Academy Motor Lodge, 62 Creyke Road, Ilam, Christchurch (approximately 5 minutes walk), with the overflow at nearby motels. Early registrants will therefore be accommodated at the most convenient location. Units booked range from studio, 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom units, accommodating up to 2, 3 and 5 people respectively. All units contain basic kitchen facilities. Continental breakfast is available on site for \$7.00 per person.

Cheaper cabin accommodation is available from the Riccarton Park Motor Camp, 19 Main South Road, located some 30 minutes on foot from the University. Please arrange to book direct - phone (03) 348 5690, fax 348 3855.

Travel arrangements

You are urged to make travel bookings as soon as possible in order to take advantage of low fares. Canterbury members will be available to meet arriving members from the airport, rail station or other termini (provided these details are communicated to us on the registration form) and arrangements will be made to assist on departure.

Council and RRs' meeting

Council and Regional representatives will meet from midday on Thursday 3 June and all day Friday 4 June, with joint meetings on Thursday evening and on Friday. It is expected that these meetings will take place at the Centre for Continuing Education, University Drive.

Registration

The registration desk will be open at the Ngaio Marsh Function Centre from 3.00 - 6.00 pm on Friday 4 June and from 8.30 to 9.00 am on Saturday 5 June. A light meal can be provided in conjunction with the social time on Friday evening at the Centre for Continuing Education at 7.00 pm if arranged in advance on the registration form.

Photographic Competition

Details of the Photographic Competition associated with the AGM are in the enclosed form which accompanies your publications. Generous prizes have been made available for the winners in each category. Judging will be done "professionally" by members of the NZ Photographic Society.

Contributed papers and posters

An exciting line-up of topics and speakers has been arranged for the Conference Day. However submissions for additional presentations of papers on Saturday 5 June, either orally or in poster

form, are invited. Any topic relevant to ornithology in New Zealand or the South Pacific region will be considered. Talks should be 15 minutes long with 5 minutes for questions. Please send your submissions with your registration form, or email Kerry-Jayne Wilson on wilsok@tui.lincoln.ac.nz.

There will also be facilities provided for poster and other presentations. Please indicate if you wish to present a poster, or if another presentation the nature of the presentation, with your registration form.

All day field trips

Two very different field trips are being offered for Sunday 6 June. Field trips are of course weather dependant, and all participants should be prepared for cold and possibly wet conditions, and have stout footwear. Early registration is recommended. A packed lunch is included in the cost of both full day trips.

Arthurs Pass - a spectacular trip across the Canterbury Plains and into the Southern Alps, with stops at Lake Pearson (Great Crested Grebes and other waterbirds) and various forest types, including beech. Visit Arthurs Pass village and the top of the pass in the alpine zone above the treeline. Birds will be relatively few in quantity but excellent in quality!

Banks Peninsula - a full day ramble through a wide variety of habitats, including visits to the northern end of Lake Ellesmere, Lake Forsyth, Okuti Valley, over Gebbies Pass to Lyttelton Harbour, Whitewash Head, the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Bromley Sewage Ponds. Expect waterbirds, seabirds, bushbirds and some estuarine species.

Half day field trips

Three half day field trips are offered on the morning of Monday 7 June. Travel arrangements from Christchurch should not be made prior to 1.00 pm if you are intending to participate on one of these trips.

Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Bromley - visit to see waterfowl in large numbers, plus winter waders and other shorebirds.

Peacock Springs and Ashley Estuary - usually closed to the public, Peacock Springs is a remarkable private conservation initiative. Birds being captive-bred include Shore Plover, Black Stilt and Auckland Island Teal. A visit to the Ashley Estuary for waders and waterbirds follows.

Kaituna Lagoon, Lake Forsyth, Okuti Valley - the morning's portion of the full day Banks Peninsula trip, with a range of habitats including lakes, coast and forest remnants.

Post conference visit to Kaikoura

We anticipate that many North Island and other members may be interested in travelling via Kaikoura on their way to or from Christchurch. While we do not propose an organised trip, we recommend a pelagic trip aboard the vessel operated by Oceanwings, which should be particularly fruitful for close-up views of large numbers of seabirds in June. Please indicate on your registration from if you would like to be part of a group on Monday afternoon and we can arrange a booking for you. Normal cost is \$60.00 per person, but 8+ will normally result in a reduction to around \$45.00.

Other activities

A range of other activities is planned for the duration of the weekend, including a hotly contested twitchathon, quizzes and mystery bird slides and sounds.

Details of a photographic competition are included with your publications. Entries are to be submitted to Don Hadden, the competition organiser, and will be judged by members of the Photographic Society of New Zealand.

We look forward to welcoming you to Canterbury and to OSNZ's 60th anniversary Conference and AGM. While we cannot control winter (or any other) weather, we hope to avoid the extremes of recent years, and in any event can guarantee an enjoyable and memorable conference.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE
1999 Conference and AGM

Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

60th Anniversary Conference and Annual General Meeting

5-7 June 1999

University of Canterbury, Christchurch

PROGRAMME

Thursday 3 June

- 1200 Lunch
- 1300 RRs' and Council meetings
- 1800 Light meal
- 2000 Joint RRs' and Council meeting

Friday 4 June

- 0900 Council and RRs' meeting
- 1200 Lunch
- 1300 Council and RRs' meeting
- 1500 onwards - registration**
- 1800 onwards - social evening
- 1900 Light evening meal available
- 2000 Council meeting

Saturday 5 June

- 0830 Late registrations
- 0900 Conference paper presentations

- 1230 Lunch
- 1400 Conference paper presentations
- 1700 Social hour
- 1830 Dinner
- 2000 AGM

Registration for the day time presentations includes morning and afternoon teas plus lunch

Sunday 6 June

- 0700 Arthurs Pass field trip departs
- 0800 Banks Peninsula field trip departs
- 1900 Annual conference dinner and prize awards

Monday 7 June

- 0830 Short field trips depart, returning by 12.30 pm.

Contact details

Registrations and organising committee -

OSNZ Conference & AGM
C/o Marjory Davis
223 Hills Road
Christchurch 8001
Email

t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz

Paper and other presentations

Kerry-Jayne Wilson
Ecology and Entomology Department
Lincoln University
P.O. Box 84
Lincoln University
Fax (03) 3253844
Email wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz



What's in a Name?

Among the recommendations of the recent Publications Review adopted by Council this year was the decision that *OSNZ News* should cease to be a supplement to *Notornis* and become instead the Society's official magazine in its own right.

OSNZ News has served members well since its inception by Barrie Heather, then editor of *Notornis*, over 20 years ago. Reluctantly resisting an impulse to call it *Notornis Droppings*, in the first issue Barrie outlined the role and content of *OSNZ News*. These have stood the test of time and *OSNZ News* has gradually increased in size and scope.

There will be a competition to name the new magazine. Members are warmly invited to allow their creative juices to flow freely, and to forward suggestions for the magazine's name to the Editor, *OSNZ News*. In addition to the not inconsiderable mana associated with winning the competition, the winner will also be the recipient of an attractive prize.

Suggestions for the name of the new Society magazine, to take effect from the start of the new millennium, are eagerly awaited and should be in the hands of the Editor by 30 April 1999.

TONY CROCKER

Editor - *OSNZ News*

118 Cones Road

Ashley

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email -t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz

Wanted - Membership Secretary and Back Numbers Convenor

After eight years sterling service to the Society, Hazel Harty has decided to relinquish these two positions.

Membership Secretary - the person should have had some office experience, banking and computing skills and be able to keep accurate records. Seasonally demanding, but ideal for someone with time on their hands and wanting to give back to the Society. Must have a fairly tidy mind or chaos will reign! Correspondence with RRs, old members and new are some of the pleasures.

Back Numbers Convenor - main prerequisite is a space to store back numbers of *Notornis* and *OSNZ News* in a vermin-free environment, such as a spare room or dry and secure outside shed. Tasks include accurate recording of stocks, corresponding and posting of journals and liaising with the Membership Secretary.

The positions are honorary ones as Officers of the Society, and may be undertaken by a single person or two separate people. Further information may be obtained from:

Christine Reed

Hon. Secretary

OSNZ

P.O. Box 12397

Wellington, or

Hazel Harty

Membership Secretary

P.O. Box 316

Drury, South Auckland

Change of address - Nest Records Scheme

Two important events have occurred in the life of our Nest Records Scheme Convenor Hugh Robertson. Firstly Hugh and family have moved, so contributors to the Scheme are asked to note that nest record cards should now be sent to OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, NOT to the Deller Grove address as in *Notornis*.

The second is the safe arrival of Matthew Quin Laurens Robertson on 15 November - congratulations to Hugh and Lea.

Visit to Fred Kinsky

Your President made a flying visit to Germany during a whirlwind three days of museum visits in Frankfurt and Bonn in August. Fred Kinsky, (past President 1971-75) at the good age of 88, is now a resident at the Altenzentrum St Joseph, Elisabethstrasse 7, D48336 Sassenberg, Germany (phone (49) 258 393130).

Recently confined to a wheelchair, this enables him to be taken for pleasant walks in the surrounding township and on various country and forest paths. We were both glad of a drink and strawberry shortcake at the local coffee shop after an hour of the rural pathways.

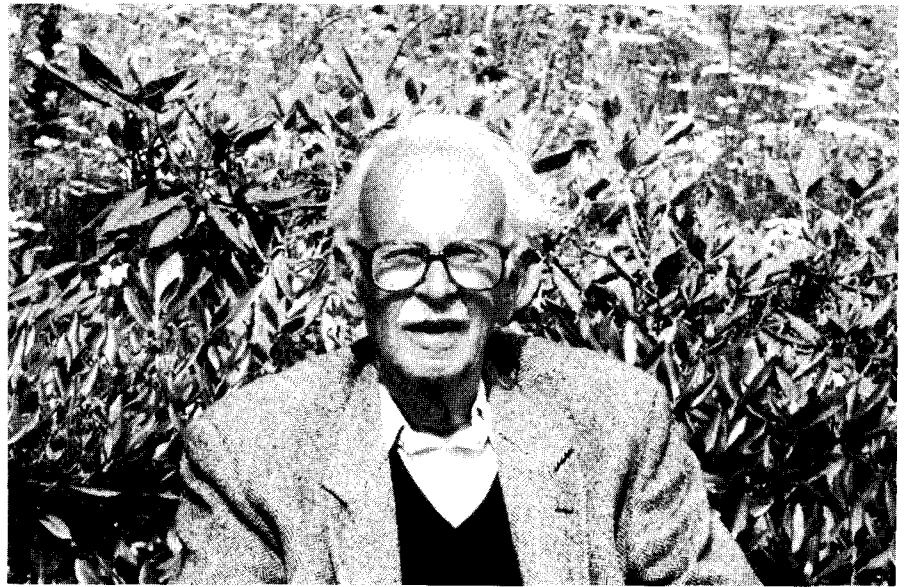
Still active in ornithology of the philatelic world (the full stamp collection is on the shelves for reference), Fred was glad to hear of old friends and activities of the Society. The efficient German transport system made what seemed on the map to be a difficult trek into a pleasant and timely interlude.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

Dick Veitch Retires

A public service career, that took him from a humble cadet in the Wildlife Service to a conservationist with an international reputation in the protection of endangered species, ended when Dick Veitch retired from his position as Technical Support Officer (Biodiversity) in the Auckland Conservancy of the Department of Conservation. Dick had just returned from an expedition to Raoul Island to check on some of the pest eradication work in which he has been involved for over thirty years.

Dick's career started in 1962, and he worked all over New Zealand including the subantarctic islands and the Kermadecs. In 1970 he was appointed Senior Wildlife Officer (Protected Fauna), responsible for conservation of fauna in the northern half of the North Island. He also worked on Campbell Island and in searches for Kakapo in Fiordland.



Fred Kinsky.

Photo C.J.R. Robertson

In 1987 he was one of the original staff of the new Department of Conservation as Senior Conservation Officer (Flora and Fauna). "Dick leaves a legacy in terms of species saved.... Few people have had such a distinguished career in conservation" said Conservator Stella Frances. "His eight years of work leading to the eradication of feral cats on Little Barrier Island and latterly the eradication of rats on Tiritiri Matangi, means that many of our endangered species stand a real chance of survival. He is one of New Zealand's foremost experts on wading birds and is well respected within and beyond these shores."

Dick has also been involved in projects in Australia, the United States, Great Britain, Mauritius and the Seychelles. He intends to continue his contributions to conservation projects and his work with the Ornithological Society.

DoC in-house publication

Rare Waders and Rarer Names

On the morning of Saturday 29 August I visited the Turakina Estuary, just south of Wanganui, to investigate changes to the topography of the area after recent floods, and particularly to see what effect the changes had had on the Black-fronted Dotterels which frequent the area.

Happily, about a dozen Black-fronted dotterels were present, along with six Banded Dotterels and, unusually, a Wrybill. After a few minutes, what looked like a Banded Dotterel flew past me - but this bird had an orange head! It landed within 20 metres and was in view side-on.

In size and jizz it was just like a Banded Dotterel, but its back and wings were grey rather than brown and the

orange/rust colour noted in flight extended over its shoulders, nape and forehead, and in a broad band across the breast. From the bill, though, behind and below the eye was a black mask and another blackish mark was in an arc across the forehead. The forehead below the blackish mark and the throat were both pure white, as was the lower breast and belly. The bill was black and much like a Banded Dotterel's.

So the bird was a near breeding plumaged male Mongolian Dotterel, a rare bird in national terms with less than five records per year (though paradoxically not on the RBC rare bird list?), and this is the first acceptable record for the south-west coast of the North Island - a record in *HANZAB* for Hokio Beach was only "probable" (CSN), and one previously reported for the Manawatu has been withdrawn by the observer.

Apart from its geographical rarity, the timing and plumage are also odd. Winter records in New Zealand are very few, and birds in good breeding plumage are in the minority, and usually in our autumn. It is most unlikely that a bird in breeding plumage would have arrived in New Zealand from the north, so had this bird been at Turakina all winter?

The bird was still present when I was able to return two days later. I was more surprised to find that only some 25 metres away was another unusual wader - this one larger and paler, and quite obviously a New Zealand Dotterel. NZ Dotterel is also remarkably uncommon on the south-west coast of the North Island, there being only 13 records in the past 30 years between Wellington and south Taranaki (CSN), so perhaps changes to this estuary are going to be to the liking of rare waders! The NZ Dotterel remained until 3 September, but unfortunately the Mongolian Dotterel was not seen after 31 August.

Finding a Mongolian Dotterel was good, identifying it as *Charadrius mongolus* was hardly difficult, but wondering what to call it in English is more vexing - in Australia and the USA: Mongolian Plover. For the rest of the world Lesser Sandplover is correct. Isn't it a ridiculous state to be in? Why do we insist on having our own uniquely Kiwi names for birds that occur across the world? Lesser Knot and Siberian Tattler are two that spring to mind. We even have our own names for some Australian birds - eg Nankeen Kestrel and Spur-winged Plover.

Birding is a changing, dynamic subject, with species being split and merged and new names in current usage across the world. I think that it is time for OSNZ to promote the standardisation of English names, as requested by the IOC, with changes as and when required. At the very least we should be using the same names as the Australians use. I personally thought that it was a shame that our new *Field Guide* perpetuated out-of-date, esoteric names, and a recent review of the book in the *British Birding World* noted the same in an otherwise (and justifiably) excellent review.

We are currently using over 40 names which are different to those in international use. What do other OSNZ members think?

IAN SAVILLE

West Auckland Kookaburra

A Kookaburra was seen at Oratia, on the edge of the Waitakere Ranges, West Auckland, a couple of years ago, though I didn't see it. It was the only one I have heard of in this area.

On the morning of 9 October 1998 I was in the bush, clearing the possum trap for the tenth time in two weeks, when somewhere nearby I heard the unmistakable laugh of a Kookaburra. I got into the open for a better view. I couldn't see it, but it was obviously in pine trees on a neighbouring property. Very worried that it would go the wrong way and so avoid being added to my garden list, I tried to get closer to it. To my true delight it flew into pine trees in my garden!

I still couldn't see it, but its position was given away by Starlings and Tui that were mobbing it. I counted as many as 10 Starlings and six Tui involved in the attack. By now I was back at my house and watched as the mobsters forced the Kookaburra to fly overhead and into the next clump of pines. Again the Kookaburra was not visible, but the mobbing birds gave away its position. It was soon forced to fly yet again but that was the last I saw or heard of it.

Several questions spring to mind, which readers might have views on. Firstly, why did the Kookaburra get

mobbed? It is unlikely that any of the Starlings or Tui would have ever seen such a bird. So was that why they acted as they did? Tui are very aggressive toward any bird landing in their trees, and will chase them away, though they don't usually follow beyond their territorial trees. However I can't remember a Starling mobbing in this way.

Could this be part of the reason that Kookaburras have not expanded their range in New Zealand, as every time one tries to leave their regular sites they are mobbed so much that they are forced to move?

ADRIAN RIEGEN

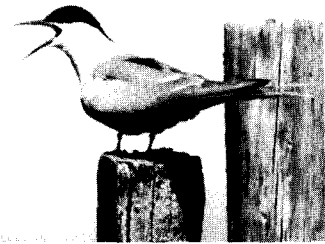
Iceland - land of fire and ice

Why not add Iceland to your list of future birding destinations? It might seem a long way from here (and it is), but if you are planning to fly across the Atlantic sometime, why not arrange to go via Iceland? That way it will probably cost no extra to get there. And you'll certainly be pleased that you went.

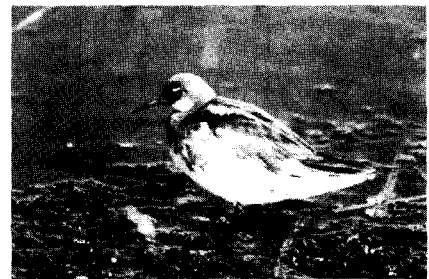
Iceland is situated about 300 kms from Greenland, about 800 kms from Britain and about 1,000 kms from Norway. It has a land area about 90% the size of our North Island, and 10% of it is under permanent glaciers. It is largely treeless, and this is no doubt one of the limitations on the number of bird species which breed there. Over 330 species have been recorded, but many of these are vagrants, and only about 70 species breed regularly. This may not sound very exciting when you consider that even our near neighbour Australia has about ten times as many breeding species. But believe me the birds of Iceland can be very exciting because of their ease of accessibility, the vast numbers of some species, and the fact that they are Northern Hemisphere species with which many of us are not familiar.

If you want to maximise the number of species you see there, then spring and autumn are said to be the best times to visit, as these are the peak times for migratory birds to pass through on their way to and from their Arctic breeding grounds. We went in summer (second half of June) on a 13 day guided birding tour. The weather was occasionally rather cool, sometimes damp, but mostly quite pleasant. The birds which breed in Iceland were in their breeding finery and busy at their task. Of course if you are one of those people who claim they don't need much sleep, then maybe you could see all we saw in half the time, because there is more or less 24 hours of daylight each day!

Seabirds are present in huge numbers, breeding in burrows (puffins), on cliffs (Northern Fulmar, Common Guillemot, Brunnich's Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake), under boulders (Black Guil-



Arctic Tern



Red-necked Phalarope



Kittiwakes on their cliff nests.

All photos by Hugh Clifford

lemot), or on the ground (Arctic Tern, Great Skua, Arctic Skua). Then there are the waders which also breed on the ground near the shore or on grazing land, both near the coast and in the interior. It is a treat to see the waders in breeding dress and indulging in breeding behaviour, rather than the large, amorphous and comparatively colourless flocks of waders we see here out of their breeding season. "Our" waders of course go north to Alaska and Siberia, whereas the ones in Iceland come from places like Africa, so there are some that we don't see here. Common Redshanks seemed to be the most obvious, but Snipe, Whimbrel, Golden Plover, Dunlin and Red-necked Phalarope were also common.

Then there are the waterfowl. Around the coast the most obvious species is the Eider. At the time of our visit the males were still in their striking breeding dress, and, though some ducklings were seen, most of the ducks were still sitting. There are about 20 duck species on the Iceland list, and in summer Lake Myvatn in the north of the country is home to about 100,000 ducks.

Many duck species were new to us, though not to our European companions. However two species which got them excited were Harlequin and Barrow's Goldeneye, because these are North American species, and Iceland is the eastern limit of their range. We saw two breeding species of goose (Greylag and Pink-footed), and frequently admired the beautiful white Whooper Swan. The two divers (Great Northern and Red-throated) were something special, and the Slavonian Grebe was a little cutie.

Anyway, I'm not trying to give you a complete list of the birds we saw, and if you went to Iceland and had eyes only for the birds you'd be missing an awful lot. The landscapes are varied and magnificent, the plants are fascinating, the geology and vulcanism are amazing, and the human history is long and impressive. What other reasons do you need to put Iceland on your list?

HUGH CLIFFORD

Late records of N.I. Thrush?

I had never owned or read Perrine Moncrieff's *New Zealand Birds and How to Identify Them* as I was weaned on the 2nd edition of *New Zealand Birds* by W.R.B. Oliver (1955). I spotted Moncrieff's second edition (revised and enlarged) at a recent antique fair in Rotorua and purchased same to add to my library. It is not dated but I believe it was published soon after the first edition which came out circa 1926, which was also not dated.

It was signed on the title page O.S. Burt. Who is or was O.S. Burt? Was he a member of OSNZ? In the body of the book he or she has made annotations concerning sightings of various birds around Atiamuri in 1943 and 1945, also at Katikati in 1944. Two notes which intrigued me are those concerning North Island Thrush and Linnet.

The notes read as follow: North Island Thrush - "Saw Atiamuri 14/3/45 5.30 pm. Scrub besides river.", and the Linnet "Atiamuri 3/45 - A few." There appears to be no confusion with Song Thrush as the annotation states "Atia - fairly plentiful. 3/45."

The North Island Thrush, now referred to as Piopio or New Zealand Thrush, had all but disappeared by 1900. The last confirmed specimen in the North Island was shot at Ohura, southern King Country, in 1902. "Reports of sightings, mainly in the Urewera Ranges and inland Wanganui/Taranaki up to 1950 could not be confirmed" (Heather & Robertson, 1996). Was the sighting at Atiamuri a remnant population still hanging on in 1945? Next time I pass through Atiamuri my eyes will be wide open!

The Linnet, often referred to as the Grey Linnet, is an exotic species and was introduced from England by both the Auckland and Nelson Acclimatisation Societies around 1867/68. The introduction appears to have failed, but other small birds such as Goldfinch, Greenfinch (Green Linnet), Redpoll, Yellowhammer and Chaffinch have all become established.

There have been many reported sightings of Linnets but these were not confirmed and were most probably those of Redpolls. However, the sighting of Linnets "A few - Atiamuri 3/45." will again whet my appetite when I travel through Atiamuri.

ROY WESTON

Correction - Blue Penguin symposium

The preliminary announcement regarding the Blue Penguin Symposium to take place in Oamaru in 1999 incorrectly included the date Friday 18 July. The correct date is Friday 18 June 1999. My apologies for any confusion created by this oversight.

The full programme and call for registrations will be published in the March *OSNZ News*.

TONY CROCKER

23rd IOC, Beijing, 2002

At the 22nd International Ornithological Congress held in Durban, South Africa, 16-23 August 1998, the International Ornithological Committee voted to accept the invitation from Chinese ornithologists to host the 23rd International Ornithological congress in Beijing, China, on 11-17 August 2002. Information can be obtained on email (infocenter@ioc.org.cn), via the internet at <http://www.ioc.org.cn> or via the homepage of the 22nd congress at <http://www.ioc.org.za>.

Requests to be included on the mailing list for brochures and for information on the 23rd congress should be sent to the Secretary-General (Professor Xu Weishu, Beijing Natural History Museum,

1-1-302, Beijing Science and Technology Commission Apt, Balizhuang, Haidian district, Beijing 100037, China. Ph/fax 86 (10) 6846 5605, email s-g@ioc.org.cn or the Assistant Secretary-General (The Honourable Liu Feng, China International Conference Centre for Science and Technology, Xueyuan Road, Beijing 100081, China. Ph 86 (10) 6217 4952, fax 86 (10) 62180142, email liufeng@public.bta.net.cn).

All enquiries about the scientific programme, as well as comments and suggestions for the general programme, plenary lectures and symposia should be sent to the Chair of the Scientific Programme Committee (Dr Fernando Spina, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca' Fornacetta 9, I-40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italy. Ph 39 (51) 65 12 111, fax 39 (51) 79 66 28, email infsioc@iperbole.bologna.it)

Information about the IOC can also be obtained from our new home page at <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/IOC/> which is currently under construction.

WALTER BOCK

President, 23rd IOC

Moa Footprints wanted

I am interested in footprints and trackways of the extinct moa species. I am aware of specimens, both originals and casts, in museum collections around New Zealand and I have accessed most of these. There are occasionally anecdotal suggestions that some material may be in the hands of private collectors. If any readers have knowledge of moa footprint or trackway material that is held privately, I would be interested in hearing about it.

I would be similarly interested in receiving information about material held either in museum or private collections overseas. It appears that some material was distributed in the late 19th or early 20th centuries by the scientific educational supplier Wards, but to whom and how much has not been ascertained.

My thanks in advance if you can help out with this. I have hopes of preparing a catalogue of specimens and their repositories and to accompany this with an illustrated guide. We also hope to date the substrates in which these ichnites (fossil footprints) have been found.

Associate Professor MURRAY GREGORY

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Auckland

Email m.gregory@auckland.ac.nz

Review

Forshaw, J.M. and Kirschner, D. *Encyclopaedia of Birds - Second Edition* (1998). University of New South Wales. 240 pp. ISBN 0 86840 7127. AUD49.95.

As described on the cover, this is "a comprehensive illustrated guide by international experts". Following a general introduction to birds, their behaviour and habitat requirements, the main section of the book looks at each order of birds. A box of "key facts" is included for each order. These state the number of species within that order, along with a diagram showing the smallest and largest species against a recognisable symbol for size comparison. Also listed are those species of conservation concern, ranging from critically endangered to vulnerable. A brief outline of each family is then given.

A book of this size could not hope to cover each species in detail, but it is a useful introduction to the world of birds. Illustrated with over 200 high quality photographs (with a definite bias toward the Australasian region), along with many paintings and maps, anyone with a general interest in birds would find this a welcome addition to their bookcase.

PAM AGNEW

Recipe for Recovery

The inscription on the metal bands used by the US Department of the Interior to tag migratory birds has been changed. The bands used to bear the address of the Washington Biological Survey, abbreviated "Wash. Biol. Surv.", until the agency received the following letter from an Arkansas camper:

"Dear Sirs,

While camping last week I shot one of your birds. I think it was a crow. I followed the cooking instructions on the leg tag and I want to tell you it was horrible."

The bands are now marked Fish and Wildlife Service.

from *Galab*, in-house newsletter of Birds Australia.

Regional Roundup

Far North

It is taking me a little longer than anticipated to come to grips with the role of RR for Far North OSNZ but we have had a very entertaining meeting and several eventful outings in the past few months.

On 5 August we were captivated by tales of Gerry Clarke and his numerous sorties to the Bounty Islands. Gerry showed us breath-taking video footage

of the islands and kept us amused and astonished at his adventures. Andrea Booth then rounded off the talk by giving us a summary of her research at the Bounty Islands, and although it was the fourth time I had heard Andrea's talk I was still captivated by the photos.

We were lucky enough to have a meeting at the Aroha Island Ecological Centre in Kerikeri, and during our time there we were entertained by a tame Pukeko who rummaged through our gear and cried when he was ignored. Our next speaker is DoC worker Sandra Heihei who is spreading the word about Kukupa (Keruru) in Tai Tokerau (Northland).

The monthly beach patrols continue in the Far North, primarily on 90 Mile Beach and Karikari. I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Isobella, John and Laurie for organising these patrols. Beach patrolling is a wonderful way to get out and explore the coast of New Zealand, catch up with fellow OSNZers, learn about seabirds, and beach comb- you never know what treasures you may find! The real gem on the last beach patrol of 90 Mile Beach was the discovery of a Leach's Petrel (yet to be confirmed).

We also managed to get out to Motukawanui Island for the annual tree planting excursion. This was delayed (as in previous years) due to bad weather. However we finally made it across to the island on 15 August. Although it was a little windy, Mother Nature smiled down on us with a hot sunny day. This year several thousand trees were planted. This was a mammoth effort for Far North and Northland OSNZers, Forest and Bird, volunteers and DoC staff. All those who attended should be extremely proud of themselves. Restoration of Motukawanui Island is proceeding at a faster rate due to their efforts.

Protection and monitoring of New Zealand Dotterels at Karikari was initiated by DoC Kaitaia in September. Nicky Syddell has been aided by one of our Far North OSNZ members Anthea Goodwin, who has spent hours out watching the antics of Tūturiwhatu pukenui. I will be banding NZ Dotterel chicks in the Far North as part of my research carried out with Dr John Dowding, so if you are out and about and happen to come across any please give me a call.

(Leigh Honnor)

Northland

In early August a group from Northland OSNZ spent an interesting weekend on Tiritiri Matangi Island in the Hauraki Gulf. It was wonderful to see the great variety of birds so close at hand, and to listen and identify their calls. The three tame Takahe, which wander casually around the dwellings, were a sight

to behold. The Kokako came down from the tree-tops to bathe and drink at the water troughs, where most of us had the pleasure of watching them. The keen photographers had a ball.

During the evening, armed with torches, we set off to watch Grey-faced Petrels fly in and scramble up through the undergrowth to their burrows. Some people were making weird calls and these actually seemed to attract the birds which occasionally answered. One lucky person saw a lone kiwi scuttling off down a track. A great weekend was had by all.

Some of our members have been away on very interesting trips. Gerry Brackenbury visited Codfish Island, off Stewart Island, and gave an informative talk with slides. Dr Ray Pierce went to South Africa and visited some wildlife parks where he saw many species of animals and birds. His trip was brought to life with some wonderful slides. Pauline Smith went to Norfolk Island where she saw, among other things, hundreds of White Terns.

Prue Cozens went up to the Far North recently and saw 16 Royal Spoonbills sitting in their favourite *macrocarpa* tree at Unahi, just north of Kaitaia. Some of us went with a DoC worker who is monitoring Fairy Terns to Mangawhai Spit in August. We saw four terns flying together, then sitting in pairs on the sand before flitting off to meet up with the other pair again. They continued this activity for the one to two hours we were on the spit. The same day we saw 74 New Zealand Dotterels, some in breeding plumage, walking among the short grasses and weeds in a sheltered damp area between some sandhills. Recently seven Cattle Egrets were seen amongst a herd of dairy cows on the old Kokopu Road just north of Whangarei.

We continue to patrol about 34 kms of the west coast near Dargaville, and about 27 kms on the east coast near Whangarei on a regular basis. We have had big numbers of diving petrels, Fluttering Shearwaters and Blue Penguins during the past four months on both coasts.

Members are looking forward to the Whangarei and North Kaipara Harbour censuses, and helping with the Far North wader census, which is always a favourite activity, plus our Christmas barbecue, all in November.

(Janet Snell)

South Auckland

Our monthly meetings have had an international flavour recently. Paul Harrison took us through Hong Kong, England, Gambia and back to New Zealand. Not only were we treated to excellent quality slides of such avian delights as Abyssinian Roller and Senegal Coucal, but Paul also had some stunning shots of butterflies and wildflowers as well.

Pam and Des Agnew shared their experiences of spring migration in the Lone Star State, where over 300 species were seen during a trip in April with Paul Harrison and Keith Woodley.

What would we call ourselves if our national icon were to become extinct? This question was posed at our November meeting by Adele Smaill, who runs the Kiwi Recovery Programme on the Coromandel Peninsula. Adele gave us a very interesting and insightful talk about her work. The outlook for unmanaged populations appears gloomy, but thankfully there are dedicated people like Adele which gives tremendous hope for the future of this national treasure.

We had a mini wreck of Fluttering Shearwaters on our beaches in early spring, with 38 being picked up right on the tideline in August, followed by a further 10 in September and 10 in October. Five species of prion were collected in October - Fairy, Thin-billed, Antarctic, Salvin's and Broad-billed. Other southern species included two Kerguelen, one Cape, one Blue and three White-headed Petrels. However the most exciting find of recent times was two Westland Petrels, both found on south Kariotahi Beach in October. These are the first of this species to be found on our stretch since 1985. As expected, the November patrol saw the start of the "Sooty season", with 11 Sooty and two Short-tailed Shearwaters being picked up.

In early September we had our annual weekend trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island. The kowhai were only just starting to flower, but the birdlife was still prolific. Sitting quietly at the end of the Wattle Track, our patience was rewarded with excellent, close-up views of three Kokako. At one stage one was even feeding out in the open, on the ground, on the main vehicular track to the wharf! Unfortunately the Little Spotted Kiwi were not so bold, with only one call being heard.

The Firth of Thames summer census has just been completed, with numbers of godwits and knots appearing to be down on recent counts. Other sightings included 20 Whimbrels, a tattler, three Marsh Sandpipers, three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and eight Pacific Golden Plovers.

(Pam Agnew)

Waikato

The topic of our August meeting was Black-billed Gulls. Tony Habraken described the banding work that he and others have been carrying out at Manukau Harbour and at Miranda on the Firth of Thames in recent years. We tend to think that everything must already be known about relatively common bird species. Then someone realises that there are gaps in the knowledge and starts a study to fill some of them. So Tony's description of results of this study on movements after

fledging, plumage changes with age, at first breeding, etc, not only taught us a lot, but also emphasised how much more there is to learn.

Another August activity was the annual Cattle Egret survey. There are two places near Hamilton where the birds return each year between breeding seasons in Australia. These preferred places cover just a few dairy farms, and goodness knows why the birds come back to them when there are thousands of other dairy and beef cattle farms in the Waikato to choose from. It does however make it easy for us to find them each year. Finding them is one thing, but counting them is another, and they are adept at making it difficult by keeping their distance, hiding below drain banks and so on. Numbers fluctuate from year to year, and this year there was an increase at Rangiriri to 230 from 180 last year, while the Ngaroto count (35) was unchanged from last year.

In September Paul Harrison spoke at our evening meeting, with a selection of slides he had taken in New Zealand, the UK, Hong Kong and Gambia. His extensive ornithological knowledge, together with his expert photography, ensured that we had a fascinating evening. The destination that was least known to most of us was the Gambia on the west coast of Africa, through it is apparently fairly popular with British birders.

Debbie Stewart-Badger, of the Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust, was our speaker for October. She gave a highly entertaining and very informative account of her work in rehabilitation and breeding of harriers and falcons. The ingenious methods of training or retraining these birds to fly and hunt, and the tremendous amount of work involved, impressed us all.

Our October field trip was to the Miranda Shorebird Centre for the annual "Welcome to the Birds". It was the usual interesting day, but inspecting the waders and other birds on their high tide roosts was a task for the more hardy enthusiasts, as the weather was none too pleasant.

Two notable sightings have been a flock of 14 Kaka feeding on *Acacia* at Opoutere in September and 12 Royal Spoonbills at Raglan Harbour in October.

Beach patrolling has continued through the period, with tallies not being particularly numerous or containing unusual species. More seals, both dead and alive, have been seen than is usually the case.

(Hugh Clifford)

Bay of Plenty

At the start of a visit to Tasman Pulp and Paper Company's water use systems and settling ponds on 18 October 1998, which serve to clean up the water before it re-enters the Tarawera River, a pigeon flying overhead seemed to auger well for

the firm's efforts to make the heavy industrial site more environmentally friendly.

Tasman's environmental manager, Rob Hunter, took the time out of a Sunday to escort a good turnout of members from our local branch. All were there, I think, interested to get a "bird's eye view" of the running of environmental operations of the company and to ascertain whether the company's bad reputation was warranted.

The "black drain", I learned, was caused by tannin from the processed trees, which at this stage they have no way of dealing with, although they have only a limited time from Environment BOP to resolve the problem. The colour does inhibit photosynthesis and therefore the biodiversity of the river, so it is a problem with Rob Hunter recognises has to be resolved.

The scale of the industrial site and its operations necessitated the use of a bus to cover the ground which is being used to clean up the water used by them. The scarred landscape and huge, bubbling ponds, needed to filter the water through various stages before it enters the river, left me wondering whether the ideals of the RMA were achievable. Was it possible, I asked myself, to manage the adverse effects of such a heavy industrial activity to the point where I, a lover of wildlife, could live happily next door?

However the objective is laudable and we do, as Rob Hunter said, have to try. The birdlife around the ponds is not numerous by any means, but we did see ducks and NZ Scaup in one of the ponds, and stilts, Pukeko and some Californian Quail near the outlet. It is a beginning.

(Narena Olliver)

Hawkes Bay

Until recently there have been few interesting sightings. Two Cattle Egrets near Clive, first seen on 30 June, were still present in early August. At nearby Muddy Creek/Waitangi, c.250 Black-billed Gulls and c.600 White-fronted Terns had congregated, hopefully with the intention of establishing a breeding colony. A visit by Murray Jeffries on 20 October revealed increased numbers of birds but no nests yet. He also recorded 14 Bar-tailed Godwits, six Lesser Knots, a Wrybill and a NZ Dotterel. The dotterel sighting is interesting because the only records of them in the Napier/Hastings area are one on 18 November 1989, two on 20 November 1989 and one on 26 August 1990, all at Ahuriri. Gillian Eller, visiting from Auckland, reported a Kaka in Waipawa township on 23 July, and again several times in the following weeks.

Wayne and Margaret Twydlle turned up a pair of South Island Pied Oystercatchers on a visit to Mangatahi on 20 September, one of which was banded in the same area in 1993. Of the nine birds

we banded between 1993 and 1995, three have been resighted, which is pretty good going. One turned up at Farewell Spit in 1994, while another well travelled bird was seen on several occasions at Foxton Beach between 1995 and 1997, then at Whangarei this year. The current bird is the only one seen back on the breeding grounds, this being the second time we have located it.

A recent field trip to Blowhard Bush and Lawrence Hut was well attended by members, who were greeted with a NZ Robin singing near the track information board. Other birds seen or heard were Fantails, Whiteheads, Tomtits, Shining Cuckoos, Tui, Bellbirds, Chaffinches, Redpolls, Grey Warblers and a Long-tailed Cuckoo. A Common Green Gecko provided a close view in a roadside manuka.

A visit to the Ahuriri Estuary on 24 October turned up c.60 Bar-tailed Godwits and six Pacific Golden Plovers, while a Wrybill and two Red-necked Stints were present at Westshore Reserve, and scattered Pied Stilt nests. On the lagoon itself was a White-winged Black Tern.

(Margaret Twytle)

Taranaki

We noted in August that NZ Robin numbers in the Moki Forest were as high as other areas visited, with other bush birds in good numbers. At a meeting in September, members were able to observe closely the olive green colouring on a tiny Grey Warbler's body, emphasising the importance of careful observation skills. Members discussed a report of a kiwi that must be a swimmer, as it has been reliably reported on both sides of a river. Bob Talbot told us about the mist-net capture of "Flute", one of the last remaining Kokako in the Moki Forest. Two birds remain.

September's field trip was to a QEII covenanted piece of land, an area of 110 hectares of heavily forested, steep hill country. 20 bird species were identified and a great variety of native orchids were seen and named.

Members at the October meeting reported many sightings of Shining Cuckoos, the first bird being heard at Egmont Village on 22 September. The first Long-tailed Cuckoo was heard in the Waitaanga Forest on 24 October.

David Medway gave members a talk on the William Swainson bird specimens held in the Taranaki Museum. An ornithologist of note, Swainson collected his specimens in the early 1800s.

Another monthly trip was to the south bank of the Mokau River estuary. 32 species were recorded, including seven Fernbirds and many Tui, the latter feeding on flowering rewarewa.

Four coots are on Lake Mangamahoe. Two gull species and White-fronted Terns appear to be settling on the Sugar Loaf

Islands preparing to nest. One Little Egret remains at Mokau. A beach patrol report from David Medway included 24 Fluttering Shearwaters, while a later patrol produced 11 wrecks, including two Cape Pigeons.

Reports of waders indicate that the local population is breeding and numbers of migratory birds are regularly seen passing through. 37 Pacific Golden Plovers at the Waiongana River mouth far exceed any previous sightings.

A whitebaiter on the Mokau River reported large numbers of Fernbirds, and a nest with young. He also saw a pair of kingfishers attack a stoat as it climbed a large kahikatea. They were successful in knocking the stoat to the ground twice, but as the fish began to run we can't finish the story! An interesting item of news is the recent discovery of a moa bone found embedded in papa rock at Waihi Beach, Hawera. The age of the bone is to be checked.

(RosemaryMessenger)

Manawatu

As reported in the last issue, Manawatu region has recently restarted evening meetings and field trips on a more regular basis. The aim is to hold quarterly evening meetings and to have field trips about bi-monthly, plus regular beach patrols. Full details from the RR. A recent meeting heard from Massey student Sara Treadgold on her work on Fairy Terns

Good birds in the region over the late August-early November period have been as follows: five Spotted Shags flying north past Foxton Beach on 23 August were unusual, and 51 Wrybills at the Manawatu Estuary on the same day, coinciding with the main departure of Wrybills from the north, was a good count for here. A Mongolian Dotterel and a New Zealand Dotterel at Turakina on 29 August were excellent records.

September weather was dominated early on by some very strong W-NW winds which made sea-watching at Foxton rewarding - four albatross species were recorded, lots of giant petrels including flocks of 9 and 20+, and a Little Shearwater among many Fluttering and Sooties. A Rook flying down the beach on 20 September was another new bird for Foxton Beach. Two of the previously reported Glossy Ibises were seen again at Lake Omanu on 4 October and two more Barbary Doves were seen at Halcombe in September.

Wader numbers at the Manawatu Estuary started to build up in late September. The first few Red Knots arrived with one white flagged bird, and then an orange flagged one from 18 October. Numbers rose to 185 by the end of October, by which time Bar-tailed Godwits had increased to 520, also including a white flagged bird. The two wintering Red-

necked Stints were joined by up to four more during October, a Little Tern was seen twice, two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were in residence, with a Pectoral Sandpiper for comparison on 8 November.

"Our" Grey-tailed Tattler returned on 30 October for yet another summer. Pacific Golden Plover numbers increased steadily through October to a respectable total of 24 by 1 November, then there was an unexpected influx, with over 60 present on 8 November - the highest total ever. Finally a juvenile Great Knot was found on 24 October, remaining until at least 1 November - this is the sixth time a Great Knot has been found at the Manawatu, out of less than 20 records in New Zealand. What else could one expect from the best birding site in the country?

(Ian Saville)

Wellington

The survey of Wellington Harbour is now into its fifth month. Some seasonal trends are appearing, with a reduction in Red-billed Gull numbers from 1380 in July to 300 in October, and Little Shags down from 244 to 18 for the same months. The major increase has been with Fluttering Shearwaters, from 8 in July to 428 in October.

We had a walk through the bush at Tunnel Gully on the lower slopes of Mt Climie north of Wellington. We found the nesting site used by a pair of NZ Falcons in an epiphyte high in a beech tree. The birds weren't present at that time but we hope to see them later in the year.

Leigh Bull spoke to us about her research on the breeding biology of Blue Penguins on Somes/Matiu Island. As this is an island many of us visit frequently and easily, it was great to hear about the life of the penguins there.

The Chatham Islands was the topic of Hillary Aikman's talk to us in November. Hillary is the DoC Technical Support Officer for the Chathams, based in Wellington. She spoke about the many endangered species of birds there and focused on the continuing success story of the Black Robin.

Later this month we'll visit the Manawatu Estuary at Foxton with the Manawatu branch of OSNZ. Hopefully we'll see some unusual waders.

(Ros Batcheler)

Otago

A short, mild winter meant that the Silvereye banding programme was a brief one, though over 2,000 new birds were banded at three banding stations. Not much movement has been recorded away from Dunedin, so we are concentrating on movements within the city.

At least two Royal Spoonbills overwintered in Otago. The first return to the breeding colonies was at Maukiekie on 10 September - the fifth year in succession that they have arrived in the second week of September - and ten birds were at Green Island on 26 September.

The season's first Shining Cuckoo was reported by Derek Onley at Waitati on 11 September. Bob Cunninghame saw and heard the first Dunedin one on 25 September. Newly arrived Bar-tailed Godwits (40) on 15 September at Blueskin Bay had increased to 60 by 18 September.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland

We seem to have escaped very lightly from the sinking of the *Dong Won 529* off Stewart Island in October. There have been no recorded seabird deaths at all, and Eric Black, who worked on the clean-up programme, reports a Yellow-eyed Penguin porpoising through a thin slick.

Recent reports include single Reef Herons at Barracuda Point and Konini Bay, 28 Royal Spoonbills on Omaui Island on 29 October, seven Cattle Egrets at Timpanys on 10 October with 35 at Wallacetown on 31 October. A reported Silvereye with an orange band may have come from Christchurch. 14 Caspian Tern nests were at Tiwai Point on 25 November, and there were 50 scrapes at the shellbanks on 29 November, along with a White-fronted Tern colony.

This seems to be the best year ever for flowering of flax, cabbage trees and beech. All three species of beech are flowering in the Blue Mountains with great clouds of pollen. This means an enormous drop of beech seed in March, a population explosion of mice and invertebrates and a consequent increase in the stoat population. More stoats mean fewer Yellowheads. There is a plan to transfer a number of Yellowheads to predator-free Ulva Island - it will be interesting to see how they make the transition from beech to podocarp forest.

On 21 November we had our fourth annual aerial survey of gull colonies on Southland riverbeds. We were away for over four hours, including a fuelling stop at Manapouri. Some fifteen colonies were located, along with other birds seen from the air. We will need help with banding the Black-billed Gulls nesting on the Waiau Bar.

The Yellow-eyed Penguin survey of the south coast by seven members yielded several at Curio Bay, none at Blue Cod Bay and a few at Slope Point. The next day three nests were located in flax at the northhead of Waikawa Harbour. The next survey is planned for mid December.

(Lloyd Esler)

What's On



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.

17 February - evening meeting, members' night.

20 February - wader watching, Kidds Farm, Karaka. Contact Hugh Clifford. Meet opposite Bloodstock Centre 10.30am.

17 March - evening meeting, AGM.

21 April - evening meeting, Pitcairn Island, Kerry Oates.

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

Hamilton and Forest Lake monthly counts - Ph. Barry Friend (07) 8436729.
Hawkes Bay

21-26 January - field trip to Miranda and Tiritiri Matangi Island. Ph. Christine McRae (06) 8799139.

20 or 21 February - Porangahau Estuary. Ph Christine McRae.

Wellington

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04)293 5601. Harbour survey, 2nd Sunday of the month, 1-3 pm. Ph. RosBatcheler (04) 479 4095 or Reg Cotter (04) 568 6960. 1 February - evening meeting, DoC Science Centre, first floor, 58 Tory Street. How do you know what bird it is? Hugh Robertson.

1 March - evening meeting. Planned for 1999 - a trip to Matarua Island and Pukepuke Lagoon.



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