

No.90

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Note: Deadline for the June issue will be 10th May.

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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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Kaka Breeding at Mt Bruce

Twelve Kaka, eight females and four males, have been released into the Mt Bruce Forest Reserve, with the first release in the middle of 1996. These birds consisted of a mixture of wild-caught, captive-bred and hand-raised birds. Most of the birds were fitted with transmitters, which together with observations at the supplementary feed station, have allowed us to monitor the population reasonably well.

Moorhouse and Green (*Notornis* 42: 187-196, 1995), citing observations of captive-bred Kaka and wild juveniles, state that Kaka reach sexual maturity at four years of age. However five females liberated at Mt Bruce nested at three years of age and two nested at only two years of age.

Eggs in a natural nest were preyed upon soon after attempts to predator-proof the nest by banding the tree and placing Fenn traps around the site. Fortunately the female survived and has since been seen visiting one of the artificial nest sites erected to provide the birds with safe nest sites. Two females which nested in natural sites were preyed on, presumably by stoats, before staff had a chance to protect their nests. This shows just how vulnerable Kaka are to introduced predators on the New Zealand mainland.

Three females were nesting early in the new year. One had three chicks in a natural nest which is protected by metal sheeting, and now looks more like a post box than a Kaka nest, along with a ring of 20 Fenn taps. Another nested in an ideal tree site which proved relatively easy to predator-proof with a metal band. Interestingly, this female's mate was, at the start of the season, paired to the first female which survived a predator attack. This female was a little unsteady on her feet for a while with a suspected injury, but despite her recovery her mate deserted her and paired up with a two year old female. The third laid an infertile clutch in one of the artificial nest sites.

Interestingly a Starling built a new nest in this artificial nest and the Kaka very happily laid and incubated her clutch on this. We suspect that this infertility is not due to immaturity but is simply because there are not enough males to go around. We have seen paired males visiting a number of unpaired females and suspect that there may have been extra-pair matings, but this has not been confirmed.

Subsequently the loss of a male with a head and eye injury resulted in his female abandoning her nest. This injury could possibly have resulted in a fight with another of the males. Three eggs were removed from the nest and proved fertile. A two year old female, who had previously laid a clutch in an artificial nest, laid a second clutch in a dangerous nest site on which she could easily have been preyed upon. The clutch was removed and proved to be infertile, but on 4 February her new nest site was found and this time she was accompanied by a male. Copulations were observed with this new pairing.

We are presuming that the clutch is fertile and have taken all necessary precautions to secure this nest site from predators. The hand-raised female has successfully raised a brood of four chicks, which were fitted with bands and transmitters on 1 February. All four chicks have fledged and are past the worrying period which they spend on the forest floor before moving into the trees. They have moved away from the nest site and are, we believe, slowly moving toward the supplementary feed station area.

Another female, which was presumed to have left the area or been preyed on, has since returned and is regularly seen in the company of the resident birds. We currently stand at a population of two males and five females - an enviable position considering the bias of males in most of the mainland Kaka populations.

Much of this activity has taken us by surprise, but staff are doing their best to monitor and record the events. While this project has had its ups and downs, it is providing interesting information which could be applied elsewhere in the future.

We will, during the winter, add sufficient males from captivity to make up five potential breeding pairs for the year ahead. We have recently held a meeting at Mt Bruce to discuss the future of the project and have an agreed plan, including some research, to re-establish a viable, self-sustaining population of at least 20 pairs in the forest. It is expected that this goal may be reached within 4-5 years.

Predation aside, it would appear to be one of the most successful examples of returning captive-bred and hand-raised parrots to the wild. We are confident that in the long term we will have a managed but self-sustaining Kaka population.

GLEN HOLLAND

AGM and Conference - change of venue

Please note that the venue for the 1999 AGM and Conference has changed from the one previously advertised (University of Canterbury Students' Association), and will now take place at Coppertop Seminar Room, Commerce Building, University of Canterbury, on Saturday 5 June.

AGM Organising Committee

New Shore Plover Population

On 19 February, while working on the crayfish boat F.V. *Osprey* as a deckhand in the Chatham Islands, I was put ashore on the Western Reef by the skipper Geordie Murman as I was interested in having a look ashore in the area around which we fish. The Western Reef is a small (4-5 ha) low reef lying about 6 km west of Point Somes, which the sea does not wash over even during extreme weather.

During approximately one hour ashore, a population of Shore Plovers was discovered. The population, estimated at up to 12 birds, consisting of both males and females, included at least one juvenile from this breeding season. This is only the second wild natural population of Shore Plovers known - previously the species was believed to be confined to South East Island.

The following day, with the help of some others, Geordie and I organised a detailed census. This revealed that the population is 21 birds - five females, 15 males and a juvenile. The presence of males, females and young confirms that this is a resident, self-maintaining population. Given that none of the birds were banded, the number of birds and confirmed breeding suggest that the Western Reef population must be a relict of a formerly more widespread Chatham population. There is only one record of Shore Plover from Main Chatham - a single male seen at the airport.

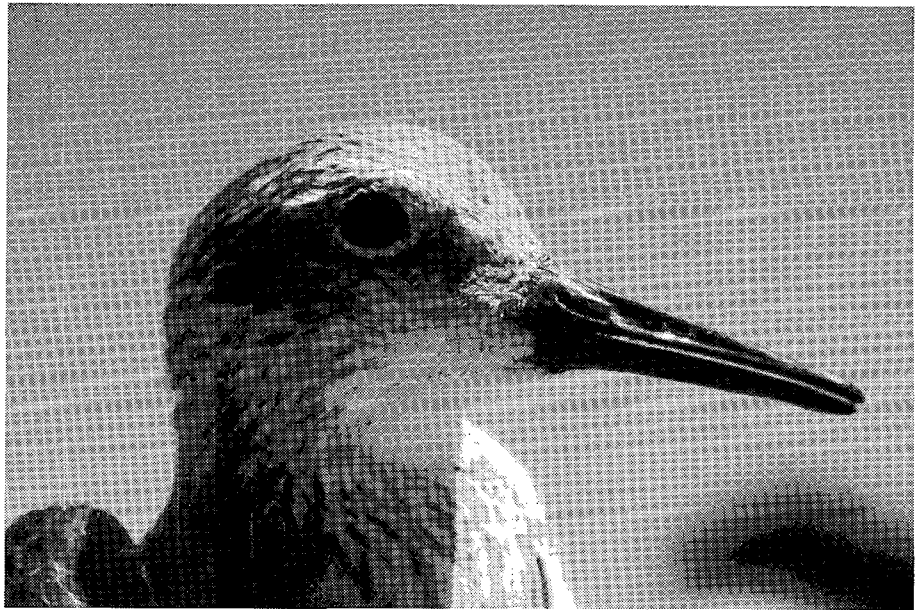
DAVE BELL

Miranda Banding

Wanting to increase our experience and knowledge of birds, the field course advertised by the Miranda Naturalists' Trust appeared to provide the perfect answer. Applications were duly made and accepted and we arrived at Miranda on the morning of 5 January, to be met by Keith Woodley and settled into our accommodation for the five days by Bev Woolley.

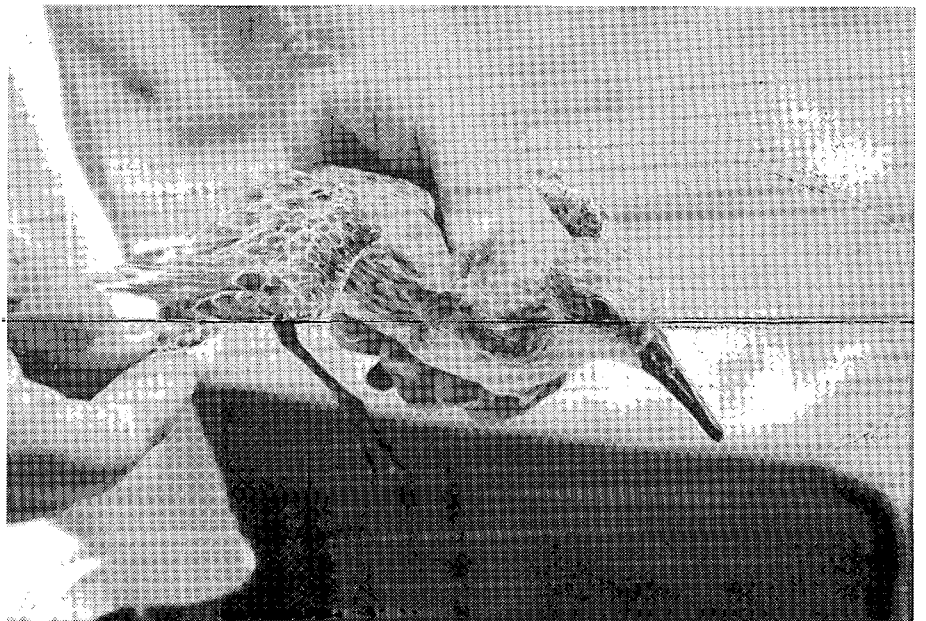
To find we had a cook and not a DIY kitchen was the best news to be greeted with. After lunch, an introduction to the course and the rest of the participants was followed by an introduction to the waders at various locations along the shellbanks. Adrian Riegen arrived with a huge van load of equipment and to organise us for wader cannon netting. After an evening meal he described in detail what we would be doing early the next morning.

Everyone was up and onto the selected shellbank before sunrise to lay out the nets and position the



Knot Closeup

Photo: Brian Tyler



Checking the Moults.

Photo: Brian Tyler

cannons. A makeshift hide was organised for the team awaiting the birds' arrival. After breakfast we went back to the hide and the 11.30 am tide.

We watched the birds move up to the hide - almost ready to fire, then a White-faced Heron flies over and the waders take off, heading south. Dick Veitch and a team make for the Stilt Ponds and eventually birds appear on the horizon, heading for the shellbank with the nets.

"BOOM" and out flies the net. Everyone runs to get the birds covered and secured above the high tide line. Around 4 pm, with some 860 knots and godwits untangled from the net, banded, flagged, aged and released, we realised that we still had our lunch untouched. A day of many new experiences never to be forgotten.

Thursday was a day spent mainly indoors on wader identification, the whys and wherefores of notes and records, and

observation of habitat. Practical identification and counting skills sessions took place at the Limeworks and Stilt Ponds. Many new species were sighted for several course members.

Chris and Janet, managers of the Broome Bird Observatory on holiday in New Zealand for six weeks, showed slides in the evening. They were welcome members of the course and we wish them a great holiday.

Another early start on Friday. Warwick Sandler took us out to the low tide zone for a bird count and study of the mud. We discussed where the birds feed on the mudflats and a microscopic view of what they eat completed the morning. Dick Veitch talked about cameras and photography, and produced an album of superb photographs which hours of patiently waiting in a hide had produced. The evening session was led by Tony

Habraken on the shellbanks, with mist nets set up to catch and band passing waders.

An even earlier start on Saturday morning for those setting up mist nets in a local orchard, and a morning of banding and note taking on a variety of passerines. Stephen Davies provided a most informative insight into the growth and migration of waders as well as moult stage identification and recording. The evening was spent watching the BBC's *The Life of Birds* with David Attenborough on video.

On Sunday morning Catherine Beard showed us the botany of the area and how different plants grown in the many environments of the shellbanks, before a final lunch and farewells.

This course certainly gave us a better understanding of birding and we would recommend the course to all OSNZ members new or experienced.

Well done to Bev Woolley and her team of helpers.

JUDITH & BRIAN TYLER

North West Australia Expedition 98

The wader and tern study expedition to Broome, 80-Mile Beach and Port Hedland Saltworks - from 1 August to 31 October - was a resounding success. All of the principal objectives were met and exceeded. At total of 127 from 18 countries participated, with an average team size of 30. Over 15,000 waders (37 species) and nearly 800 terns (7 species) were caught and banded - almost twice the previous total of any NW Australia expedition. Six birds already carried foreign bands.

There were nearly 2,000 recaptures of birds banded there in previous years, including several from as long ago as 1982 (which are now a minimum of 18 years old). As well as the "commoner" waders, good samples were also obtained of less frequently caught species such as Oriental Plover (157), Whimbrel (86), Greenshank (46), Eastern Curlew (42), Black-tailed Godwit (212), Little Curlew (212), Sanderling (393), Little Tern (359) and Gull-billed Tern (114). Four Redshanks were also caught.

The northern half of 80-Mile Beach was counted four times over the arrival period of the waders and the whole 215 km was counted (for the first time ever from the ground). The total of 465,000 waders included 158,000 Great Knots and 110,000 Bar-tailed Godwits. A large number of Greater Sand Plovers (63,000) and an amazing 57,000 Oriental Plovers were also counted. The count of Oriental Plovers is significant because it represents most of the previously estimated population visiting Australia (60,000) and

of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (67,000).

The attachment of radio transmitters to four Great Knots and two Bar-tailed Godwits helped to solve the mystery of where the waders of Roebuck Bay roost on night-time high tides. It confirmed that they do not go onto beaches used during daytime high tides - instead they fly over the mangroves at Crab Creek to shallow lagoons, or fly over the town of Broome to the famous bathing beach at Cable Beach, or (on the highest tides) fly 30 kms to the remote sandbanks at Bush Point, at the south of Roebuck Bay.

Judging by the communications received from participants after they had returned home, one of the most productive and enjoyable aspects of the expedition was the opportunity to mix with and learn from such a diversity of people with such different backgrounds, experience and expertise. Many speak of being so enthused that they have already started applying some of the techniques they learned and have commenced/expanded their own wader studies.

CLIVE MINTON

(courtesy of *The Tattler*, January 1999)



From the President's Desk

Looking north up the Otago coastline, the heat haze of the past few weeks has been replaced briefly with some clarity following a short southerly change and a few small showers of welcome rain. Below, on the sea, swarms of Red- and Black-billed Gulls, combined with Stewart Island and Spotted Shags, are harrying shoals of small fish, several "fizz boats" are trying to score something large enough to head a fishing competition, while some of the squid fleet is approaching after lighting up the night sky on the horizon for the past few weeks. A steady stream of tourists arrives daily by coach, campervan, car, ocean liner and small coastal vessel to view penguins, albatrosses and other natural phenomena.

Only a few days back the Royal Albatrosses had a front seat view of the grounding and subsequent refloating of the *Prince of Tokyo* within 500m. of their nests. Mechanical birds carrying the inquisitive media added to the stress of high temperatures in the colony by flying within long-standing aerial exclusion zones to gain "good TV news" to go with your dinner viewing. Amazingly the blame for this, and thus by association for the desertions which occurred, seemed to be directed at the Civil Aviation Authority for making such a small mark on their maps, rather than a simple omission of error from an inexperienced pilot who should have known better.

Quite apart from the signs of significant drought on the land here in the south, extended times away from the nest among the albatrosses and Yellow-eyed Penguins suggest that food supplies may be less plentiful this season as La Nina patterns affect coastal waters. Finding the significance of changes in the ecological environment can be a long and difficult process however. Recent correlation of birding observations during titi harvests, OSNZ beach patrol records and other observations on Sooty Shearwaters enabled Phil Lyver, a student from the University of Otago, to confound both ecologists and meteorologists last year with the possibility of a Sooty index for predicting El Nino events. Again a good example of various strands of information from both traditional and scientific sources enabling far-reaching conclusions about productivity and sustainability.

On the radio I was intrigued with a study at Lincoln University on the ecology of the introduced Skylark in New Zealand and attempts to explain why the species should be doing so much better here

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 1999

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 1999. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary.

All nominations will be considered by the Awards Committee and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting.

A full summary of OSNZ award procedures was published in *OSNZ News* 58 (March 1991).

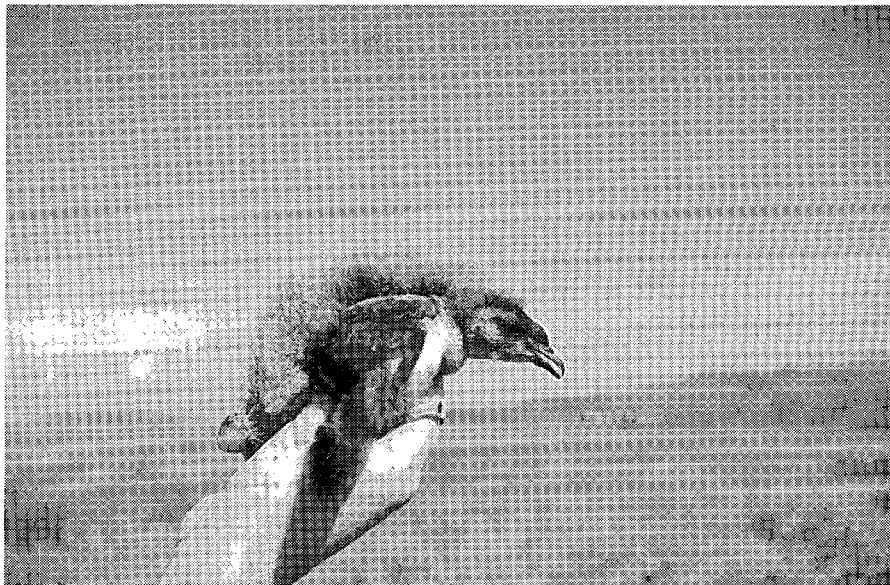
CHRISTINE REED
(Hon. Secretary)

than in its European home, where it is in decline. In spite of the seeming monoculture of much of our farmland, we do not seem to have such vast areas of monocultural cropping. I hope this is something we can hear more about at the Scientific Day at the AGM and Conference in Christchurch.

Last year started for me with "cooked" albatross in the heat of Dunedin, followed by a period coping with some chronic illness, before preparations and departure on 2.5 months of travel, chasing my elusive albatross collections around the world. Twenty museums, 600+ specimens and far too many visits to Schiphol airport, along with real birds at some South African gannetries, culminated at the IOC and some historical research in Australia. I am pleased to see that the Congress has been so well reported by two NZOCTB scholars. I was also very pleased to see such a good number of New Zealanders (some of them masquerading under other honorary nationalities) participating in all parts of the events. Apart from our own efforts in Christchurch, this was the largest New Zealand turnout at an IOC. The number of international friends from Christchurch in 1990 who wished to say thank you was again remarkable, and was a continuing credit line to those of you who worked at the 1990 Congress as participating volunteers. An indication of the level of ornithological activity in New Zealand against an international yardstick was the inclusion of John Cockrem and myself among the newly elected members of the International Ornithological Committee.

As your President I am continually surprised by the amount of voluntary work that some members provide to your Society. This on-going re-infusion of keen enthusiasm is what keeps the Society alive and functioning. Some of these infusions come from those who are recent migrants themselves and bring ideas for activities from their previous international experience. Others have been around for years and have presented themselves for action with the statement "I have been a member for years, and it is time I gave something back to the Society". This sort of pleasantly old fashioned chorus means that those who have done a good turn can relax and enjoy for a while as someone else makes a contribution.

I am pleased to acknowledge the excellent stop-gap efforts in the editing of *Notornis* during recent months. Paul Sagar successfully guided the last two issues of 1998 and will repeat the process with the June 1999 issue. The special wader issue which accompanies this magazine has been under the editorial control of Hugh Robertson. I am aware that others, including authors, have assisted in a number of ways to ensure that there has been a minimum of disruption to the editorial process. The Society is grateful also to announce that



Diving Petrel chick Mana Island.

Photo: Brian Tyler

Richard Holdaway has accepted the position of Editor and will take up his position in August. Please welcome him to his new role and ensure that his in-tray is always full!

I hope that in this the 60th year of the Society we will have some exciting new activities to take into the new millenium which will harness the skills and abilities which you all demonstrate in existing activities. These should be based on both a monitoring and recording role for the Society within the environment of the modified one in which we operate. Even in the far east of New Zealand, on Pitt Island, where the new millenium will commence, I was intrigued to find a dawn chorus of Californian Quail and rare Chatham Island Tui while looking out the window to the remote island homes of such endangered endemics as Black Robin, Shore Plover and Chatham Mollymawk. It is important, as with the Skylark above, to find why immigrants and introductions may be doing so well, endemics and natives often poorly, and to monitor both the sudden and insidious changes among those species which may seem so plentiful, such as Sooty Shearwaters. No other organisation is doing this nationally, and the challenge will be for the Society to demonstrate both the need and the practicality of a national benchmark based on the birds which are such an important parts of members' lives.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON
President

My Week on Mana Island

On a Friday afternoon I joined several other volunteers from OSNZ Wellington at the wharf for a short boat trip to Mana



Diving Petrel feeding hut, Mana Is.

Photo: Brian Tyler

Island. We were going to assist DoC staff feed Common Diving Petrel chicks that had been transferred from offshore islands around New Plymouth the previous week and others due to arrive from the Brothers Islands in Cook Strait. This is year two of a three year programme to establish a colony of diving petrels on Mana and maybe learn enough to apply the techniques to establishing new colonies of less common species.

On our arrival we found that the birds from the Brothers had arrived just before us by helicopter and were settled into their artificial burrows. After an introduction to the island and a quick meal, it seemed to be time for an exploration of the island. We went straight up the centre track to inspect the concrete gannet colony, which has now been enhanced with gannets in many new positions. Unfortunately there were no real or lives ones present.

Then south to the diving petrel colony for a look and listen to the loudspeaker system, which broadcasts petrel and shearwater calls all night long to attract passing birds into nesting in the area. Then around the corner and over the bank to the Sooty Shearwater nesting area, where we sat in the dark waiting for the sound of Sooties landing. Several were captured as they landed, mostly females with eggs about due to be laid. These were banded and released.

Early on Saturday morning, Rex Williams started the day by defrosting enough krill for the first food batch of the day. Once this was mixed, the team started the twenty to thirty minute climb to the Petrel Station for the first of two feeds given to the 66 birds each day. Each bird was brought from its burrow, weighed, fed an appropriate amount, weighed again and returned to its burrow, taking about four hours for each meal. This procedure was continued every day to assess when they may fledge. Growth and increase in energy during the week was amazing to watch, as each bird developed a personality, leading to many being known by name rather than band or burrow number.

Mana Island, since being taken over by DoC, has been planted with over 250,000 trees, with several species of bird, including North Island Robin and Takahe, being re-established. It also has large nesting colonies of Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns and, of course, Black-backed Gulls. One or two pairs of Reef Herons are on its rocky shores. The establishment of a wetland area and further tree planting will see other birds return to the island in the future.

BRIAN TYLER

Nominations for Regional Representatives 2000

Each region of the Society shall have a Regional Representative who will be an Officer of the Society and as such is responsible to the Council for the management of the region. Each RR shall serve for one year (from 1 January 2000) and is eligible for re-election.

Nominations for the Regional Representative of each region of the Society will close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 1999. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must be a financial member of the Society.

If more than one valid nomination is received by the Secretary a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2000 year.

CHRISTINE REED
Secretary



"Sinbad", at feeding hopper, Maud Island, Sept. 1998

Photo: Kirsty Chalmers

Kakapo Volunteer

It was on a morning early in May that I set out on my second volunteer trip to Little Barrier Island. The journey, on the DoC launch *Hauturu* was good - calm seas, frequent sightings of Blue Penguins and a thrilling encounter with dolphins. All the time I was looking forward to renewing my acquaintance with Little Barrier's steep tracks and rugged peaks, its ancient forests cloaked in mists and its rich native birdlife. Most all all I was looking forward to doing my bit to save the Kakapo.

It was as a Kakapo volunteer that I came to Little Barrier Island. The volunteer programme had been running since 1992, involved in taking care of supplementary feeding. Only 55 Kakapo are known to survive, and fewer than half (21) are females. In 1995 DoC established the National Kakapo Team, and the recovery plan for 1996-2005 has as its vision "to establish at least one viable, self-sustaining, unmanaged population of Kakapo as a functional component of the ecosystem in a protected habitat, and to establish two or more other populations which may require ongoing management". Research, aided substantially by sponsorship by Comalco New Zealand Ltd, is ongoing, the main areas being maximising egg and chick survival by reducing mortality (due to predation, starvation, disease, poor parenting etc), maintaining and increasing the breeding life of adult Kakapo, increasing breeding frequency, and managing islands for Kakapo populations.

The Little Barrier Kakapo came to the island in 1982, when 22 birds were transferred there from Stewart Island, where they were rapidly succumbing to cat predation (cats were eradicated from Little Barrier in 1980). However over the next seven years the new population did not attempt to breed and, in 1989,



"Sinbad", Maud Island, Sept. 1998 - with Kirsty Chalmers.

Photo: Jāsoni Mālham (DoC)

supplementary feeding began. Early signs were hopeful - after the introduction of the scheme, there was a dramatic increase in the frequency and number of recorded breeding attempts, and, in 1991, two male chicks were raised. Unfortunately they were the only chicks to be raised on Little Barrier. The last breeding attempt resulted in two infertile clutches in 1995.

Our trip started with the normal tasks of supplementary feeding. After being woken before dawn by Kaka calls, we got up and prepared ourselves. Supplementary feeding is a detailed task, and requires strict adherence to hygiene and accurate reporting of amounts of food put out and taken, as well as recording signs of Kakapo and rat activity and other interesting observations at the feeding stations. It also requires a high degree of fitness, as Little Barrier's terrain is unforgiving.

We had two feeding runs to different parts of the island. On our second day we did a summit run to supply four of the island's male birds. We climbed straight to the highest peak on the island, *Hauturu*, a steady climb up to 772m. Birds were our constant companions, one of my favourites being the North Island Saddlebacks with their comic call - a sort of cross between a squeaky toy and a car with starter motor problems! Up here,

in Hauturu's cloud forest, rainy weather is no hardship. The forest is at its best, and eddies of mist swirling about the summit merely added to the magical atmosphere. We even met a Brown Kiwi on the track one particularly wet afternoon down in the manuka scrub.

I quickly discovered that this was to be no ordinary volunteer trip. Three female Kakapo were to be removed from the island while we were there. For DoC the decision was not taken lightly. Only months previously there had been talk of removing Kakapo from Maud Island. Then the breeding season of 1998, the first for six years on the island, saw the most spectacular and unexpected breeding success since the start of the programme. Flossie and Richard Henry had been transferred in July 1996 from Little Barrier, where neither was breeding. They mated and Flossie laid three eggs, all of which hatched. All three chicks have since fledged, though the youngest was removed from the nest at three weeks of age for hand-rearing. Two are male, but the third is female, only the second to survive since 1981.

The breeding attempt has scored a number of firsts - the first time that breeding has occurred on the island, the first that Flossie is known to have bred in 16 years, and the first time that Richard Henry is known to have mated in 23 years! It is thought that the smaller size of Maud Island and the intensive supplementary feeding regime were major factors in its success.

Subsequently DoC decided to move all Kakapo off Little Barrier Island which, because of its large size and rugged terrain, is not conducive to highly intensive management. The birds are thus being moved to Maud and Codfish Islands. The pattern that has emerged is that supplementary feeding induces Kakapo to breed when they are on a rising plain of nutrition - ie when their weights are low and increasing - but has little effect when their weights are high and stable. Previously, some birds had been subjected to annual feeding pulses and some breeding had occurred. On Little Barrier Island, supplementary feeding seems to have triggered breeding initially, but once it had become established the frequency of breeding decreased. DoC believes it should be possible to make Kakapo breed much more frequently by providing pulses of supplementary food every 2-3 years and letting their weights decline in intervening years, so simulating more closely their natural food cycle.

To test this hypothesis, the three Little Barrier females and one Codfish female have been transferred to Maud Island. Two birds have not previously been fed, supplementary feeding has now ceased, and will recommence in the spring of 1999. After two consecutive breeding seasons in 1997 and 1998, DoC does not expect breeding this summer.

Another factor behind the removal of birds from Little Barrier is the presence of kiore. Removal of Kakapo will facilitate planning for kiore eradication, and give the Recovery Team time to find the Kakapo which have gone missing on the island. Kakapo have been fitted with transmitters, but if a transmitter fails the bird is effectively lost. The missing birds include two females not seen for a decade, whose rediscovery would obviously enhance the population. Also missing is the first Kakapo chick seen this century, hatched in 1981 on Stewart Island.

Kiore have been of on-going concern, as they predate Kakapo eggs and share many of their foods. Females are particularly vulnerable during breeding, mainly due to the fact that, once mating has occurred, they are essentially "solo mums", incubating eggs and brooding and raising chicks entirely unassisted. While the female is absent from the nest for long periods at night, chicks have frequently fallen prey to kiore or succumbed to exposure.

In May 1998 there were 11 Kakapo known (ie wearing transmitters) on Little Barrier (eight males and three females). The process of capturing the females got underway with the arrival of Don Merton and Malcolm Lightband, of DoC's National Kakapo Team, plus two other DoC staff, Clea Gardiner and Thelma Wilson on 13 May. The first task for we volunteers was to prepare the holding aviaries for the captured birds. Leaf litter, logs, rocks, perches and leafy shelters were gathered and arranged. Black plastic rubbish bags and netting around the outside of the wire mesh walls made a visible barrier for the birds, so that they wouldn't injure themselves trying to run through the mesh.

A non-supplementary fed bird was the first on the list for attempted capture, since she would probably be more difficult. This proved to be only too true, as staff and volunteers braved the cold and dark on three consecutive nights. At one point she cleverly climbed a tree and remained determinedly elusive, the closest to being caught when she changed trees. Her stand-off finally came to an end on 4 June, when she was caught while roosting on the ground by day. She was swiftly relocated to Maud, arriving only four hours later.

16 May was the turn of the other two females. Mal quickly picked up one bird's signal, while the volunteers furnished the transport boxes with food and cover. Possibly ten minutes had passed when an almighty racket erupted from just below us, and Mal emerged with a green cloth bag with a Kakapo shape in it. The bird was not impressed and tried to rip Thelma's shirt as she was held and examined. Three of us took her down the hill while the others set off on a further expedition for the other female. We waited anxiously and were delighted when the others appeared, bearing her in her box to the aviary.

On 17 May we carried the boxes over to the aviary and weighed the birds to ensure that they were fit and strong enough to travel. The helicopter had arrived, bringing representatives of Ngati Wai, the local iwi, who performed a karakia of farewell.

The transfer over, the team remained to clean and pack up, and to enjoy our last two days of solitude on Hauturu. With our departure the Kakapo volunteer programme on Little Barrier came to an end. Paul Jansen of DoC estimates that up to 500 volunteers have worked on the programme from 1992 to 1998. A similar programme began on Codfish Island in mid-1992, and, by the end of 1998, 350 people had worked on the volunteer programme there.

Recent news is that all the females transferred to Maud are healthy and doing well. Three males were also removed from Little Barrier in August and the remaining five males will go to Codfish later in 1999, once the kiore eradication programme has been completed.

DoC is hoping to find further Kakapo on Stewart Island, after a previously unknown female was found on the island in June 1997. Needless to say, with so few birds remaining, the addition of even one or two birds, particularly females of breeding age, would be a major boost to the Kakapo population and to its chances of survival in the next century.

KIRSTY CHALMERS

SIPO or OZPO?

Evidence and logic indicate that the South Island Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus finschi* not Pied Oystercatcher *H. longirostris* has occurred on Norfolk Island, and that it should therefore be added to the Australian list. The identity of oystercatchers seen on Lord Howe Island is unknown.

When the HANZAB team had to decide how to treat the vagrant "pied" oystercatchers from Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands they were in a quandary. To adopt them as South Island Pied Oystercatchers would have meant adding a species to the Australian list for which there was no formal acceptance. The HANZAB team were probably guided by Christidis and Boles (*The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*, RAOU Monograph 2, RAOU, Melbourne, 1994), who may have been misled by Carter (*Bird Observer* 721:2-4, 1992), as when I prepared my list of Australian bird species I was not aware that these two oystercatchers were now regarded as different species. Hayman et al (1986) lumped them under *longirostris*, and previously both were usually regarded as subspecies of the Eurasian Oystercatcher *H. ostralegus*.

When giving their reasons for excluding SIPO from the Australian list, Christidis and Boles omitted to refer to Hermes et al (*Notornis* 33: 141-149). In this paper, the second of two records from Norfolk Island resulted in photographs being sent to R.B. Sibson, who confirmed the identification and wrote "The slides solve the problem of the bird's origin, the South Island of New Zealand." Attempts to obtain a full copy of the letter or the slides have stalled.

Even without the expert opinion of the Australian Checklist Committee, logic suggests that any "pied" oystercatcher on Norfolk is more likely to be SIPO than OZPO. SIPO is a regular migrant with a maximum recorded movement of 930 km, twice that recorded for OZPO, which is not a true migrant, though they are known to cross Bass Strait. OZPOs disperse individually, while SIPOs migrate in flocks. SIPO is recorded as a vagrant to Vila in Vanuatu, and Norfolk Island is nearly twice as distant from the Australian mainland as New Zealand. Norfolk Island is also due north of New Zealand and potentially in the path of overshooting SIPOs, while completely off course of OZPOs. SIPOs are also at least five-ten times as abundant as OZPOs.

If the flock of 30 reported in December 1960 was genuine, it is inconceivable that they were anything but SIPOs. There is however some doubt, as another source, perhaps more reliable, reported just a single bird, and the northward movement of SIPOs does not normally commence until January. There was a "pied" oystercatcher on Lord Howe Island from mid 1995 to early 1998. At least five observers admitted to uncritically assuming it was an OZPO.

In SIPO the white bar on the upper wing is broader and longer (most obvious is the extra length), the white of the underwing is more extensive and white extends further up the back, ending in a point (truncated in OZPO). OZPO underwings show all black flight feathers as well as the bordering coverts, while SIPO shows black only on the tips of the primaries and secondaries and a band on the primary coverts.

Distinguishing the species on the ground is much harder, the only obvious distinction being that, on average, SIPO has almost twice as much white in the wing. There is some variation in this feature and possibly some overlap. Note that fig. 20b, p.53 in Hayman et al (1986), a standing SIPO, is wrong as it shows no trace of white in the wing. The adults of both species are well illustrated in *HANZAB*. In OZPO the tips of the wings don't quite reach to the tip of the tail, falling 1-2 cms short, but they do in SIPO. This is because SIPO has a proportionately shorter tail. Other characters, such as size, bill shape and extent of black on the breast, are too subtle to be of much value without direct comparison.

Additional information would be welcomed, and moreover, I am alerting observers to the controversy, so that future occurrences will be more critically examined and better documented.

MIKE CARTER
30 Canadian Bay Road
Mt Eliza
Victoria 3920, Australia.

(extracted and amended from a fuller article which appeared in *Australian Birding* Vol. 4 No. 4, December 1998)

A recent observation of a South Island Pied Oystercatcher was made on the NSW north coast during a recent survey of beach nesting birds. The exact location has not been released due to concerns of disturbance, by twitchers, of Pied Oystercatchers nesting nearby.

There have been no previous records of this species in Australia, although sightings of oystercatchers on Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands may have been this species. A description and photographs are being sent to the RAOU Rarities Committee.

(from *The Tattler* 18, January 1999)

Donations to the Society

I have been pleasantly surprised by the generosity of a large section of our members due to the number of donations given to the Society. Many thanks to each and every one of the following:

G. Wells, Mr & Mrs Mc Kerchar, Mr & Mrs K. Walshe, K.D.B. Thomson, Peter Howden, Ian Sutherland, Stella & John Rowe, J.F. Davidson, Mrs & Mrs D.M. Stracey, Peter Grant, Mrs J.M. Soper, Rob & Anneke Schuckard, Mona Taylor, George Brown, A.R. Carey, Mary McEwen, Nancy Tanner, Mark Neville, Ray Renwick, Frances Schmechel, Sue Cotton, Kathleen Todd, Rosemary Messenger, Margaret Bishop, Michael Fitzgerald, George Watola, Gerry Brackenbury, Anthea Goodwin, Malcolm Waller, D.H. & F.L. Booth, Martin Snowball, Gerry Clark, Robert Mills, Nicolla Sydall, L.S. Rockard, Barry Friend, Roger Meadows, Graham Hunt, Audrey Eagle, Hugh & Zoe Clifford, Lance Pickett, Barry Hartley, Dorothy Alloo, Chris Foreman, Kay Haslett, E.J. Kirk, J.R. Alexander, W.A. Watters, Mike & Sharon Graham, Colin Miskelly, Tony Beauchamp, Nikki McArthur, Kim Sterelny, Cheryl Doyle, Shinichi Nakagawa, Marie Buchler, Elise Smith, Sybill Creswell, Barbara Walter, G.L. Don, Geoff de Lisle, Graeme & Sandy Taylor, and overseas member Harro H. Mueller.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Intellectual Overload

Attending the 22nd International Ornithological Congress in Durban.

Africa is one of those places that most people interested in birds or mammals would love to visit, given the chance. The hosting on the 22nd IOC by South Africa was surely a great excuse for hundreds of academics and scientists to visit this wildlife Mecca. Thanks in part to funding from the NZ Ornithological Congress Trust Board and the Department of Ecology at Massey University, I was able to attend.

The conference was hosted at the very new International Convention Centre near the middle of Durban. Unfortunately, some things were still undergoing teething problems - for example the ridiculous charges for the use of laser pointers, and the podiums which necessitated a doctorate in electronics to operate. However on the whole the facilities were very good and the security of a very high standard. The latter seemed a little strange at first, but there is a lot of poverty in South Africa and white tourists carrying IOC satchels, cameras and expensive binoculars are not difficult to pick out in the crowd.

There was so much happening at the Congress it was impossible to go to everything you wanted to. A fifty minute plenary started the day, given by eminent ornithologists on some aspect of their lifelong research. From here on things became a little more complex. On most mornings there were five concurrent symposia, each consisting of twenty minute talks, all run so that you could move between symposia if there were several that interested you. At the same time there were also three oral presentation sessions, each with eight fifteen minute talks.

Another plenary session followed lunch and then a poster session. There were then another five current symposia and also a choice of three or four round-table discussions led by leaders in the field under discussion, which anyone interested in that field could join in. This was a very good way of learning and getting feedback. It was the first time I have seen something like this in action and it worked very effectively. Following all of this was a communal dinner and then sometimes further round table discussions or lectures. However it was often a good time to sit around and meet new people.

I presented a poster on my Masters research, and in particular the secondary poisoning of Moreporks on Mokoia Island during a mouse eradication attempt (see *OSNZ News* June 1999 for more information). I had been allocated a spot down below the main level in an out of the way corner. However I found that some poster boards had been doubled up, and managed to persuade the organisers to let me move my poster into the main foyer where everyone had their

cups of tea etc. This was a great spot, and I received some useful feedback and hopefully provided attendees with some interesting information.

The vast array of topics covered during the Congress was incredible, from the use of satellite telemetry to the origin and evolution of African and Madagascan avifaunas. What made it more demanding was that I had almost completed my Masters degree on Moreporks and secondary poisoning, and wanted to make contact with people in that area, and was already planning a PhD on Australasian Gannets, and so wanted to make contact with seabird ecologists - who mentioned birding and relaxing in Africa?

Something that was evident from the Congress was that there are some marvellous innovations in the use of technology. In a round table discussion I attended on "Weighing and observing birds - automatic data recording and processing", we learned of the use of an internal recorder (surgically implanted) which transmitted a signal to an externally attached transmitter, which then relayed all the information to a receiver. Using this system, heart rate, body temperature, plumage temperature and air pressure/flight altitude were able to be measured for up to two years in the wild - something completely unimaginable not so long ago. Various other technologies were discussed for recording visitation rates, weight of adults at the nest, the amount of food delivered, and the increase in weight of nestlings.

Areas of interest related to my work was a symposium on wildlife poisoning. P. Mineau and H. Bouwman opened the symposium by presenting some of the key concerns over pesticide use and bird conservation. Compounds such as the bioaccumulative organochlorine insecticides have been linked with the decline in some bird populations, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere. These organochlorines are still of major concern in some parts of the world because of their continued use, especially in developing countries in South America and Africa. Even in countries which have banned many of these substances, there is still concern because of heavy contamination resulting from past use.

C. Henny and others then outlined the poisoning of raptors on three scales. The first was a study of Swainson's Hawks, which showed that an estimated 20,000 hawks were killed in Argentina. These birds migrate annually between North America and their restricted wintering range in Argentina, which is now intensively farmed. In Argentina they feed on grasshoppers, which are being controlled with an organophosphorus insecticide. Birds eating these poisoned grasshoppers are killed themselves, and this is putting the Swainson's Hawk in a rather vulnerable position. The second case study was of Bald Eagles in the Fraser Delta in British Columbia. This is a major wintering site for this species and has also

become intensively farmed. A third of the Bald Eagles found dead or dying in this area (111 between 1990 and 1996) were poisoned by insecticides. The third case study was a compilation of all US raptor poisoning incidents between 1985-94. On average a reported pesticide kill occurred every two weeks, with over 20 species being affected and about 40% of incidents resulting from the normal use of agricultural pesticides. The last talk I went to in this symposium was by G. Verdoorn who outlined the hundreds of small scale poisonings of small birds in Africa, many involving poisons which have been banned but are still being used, often in deliberate attempts to kill birds perceived as pests. Birds affected ranged from raptors to cranes, gamebirds and ducks. Some were by local people for harvesting gamebirds, an extremely risky method of food collection.

Another conservation issue, which relates in part to my PhD, is the effect of ocean fisheries on seabirds. A symposium entitled "Benefits and threats from fisheries for marine birds" was opened by S. Garthe, co-convenor, by outlining some of the negative effects such as seabird mortality due to long-lining and reduced food availability due to some intensive fisheries. Some of the positive effects were also outlined, such as species which have capitalised on fisheries waste.

We then heard from a group of Australian authors, led by R. Giles, about their research into the extent of bycatch in Australian waters. Nine million hooks were observed and 30,000 seabirds of at least 18 species were killed, 75% of which were albatrosses. This number probably underestimates the kill rate due to dead birds falling off or being taken by sharks. Catch rates were highest when lines were set during daylight in summer. Methods to decrease the bycatch were also discussed, including setting at night (leading to an estimated 95% decrease), use of automated bait-casting machines and bird lines at the back of boats. Again, education, along with advocacy, appears to be a key area, as the fishermen themselves do not actually like catching seabirds.

Next we heard from R. Furness about the effects of industrial fisheries, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere. Where fisheries were in direct competition with seabirds, it was shown that the breeding success of some species has been affected and others, such as Guillemots, have had reduced adult survival. On the other hand, some species such as Kittiwakes, are doing very well and may in fact be increasing in numbers. Consumption of smaller pelagic fish may have largely replaced consumption by larger predatory fish, which have themselves been reduced by other fisheries. It seems that the effects of these fisheries are more complex than we initially realised.

R. Crawford then presented data on some of the seabirds which rely on the rich Benguela Current system on the west coast of Africa. He showed that shifts in abundance of fish due to fisheries have had effects on seabirds. In particular African penguins, Cape Gannets and Cape Cormorants have tracked cycles of both anchovies and sardines. Gannet numbers appear to be stable, but penguin and cormorant numbers have shown recent declines at some sites and decreases in total abundance have been estimated.

The last two talks at the symposium were more positive, at least for some species. An estimated 22% of total fish landings in the North Sea are discarded, and in some areas this may be as high as 45%, and may represent more than 4% of total fish biomass in these areas. These discards have been estimated to make up almost 50% of the fish consumption by all seabirds in the North Sea - an incredible statistic. This is therefore a valuable resource for some seabirds, and may explain improvements in breeding success and decreases in age of first reproduction in some species, especially large gulls and fulmars. However over-exploitation in recent years and forthcoming changes in fisheries policies are likely to influence seabird breeding performance. A trawler moratorium was imposed in the Ebro Delta in the Mediterranean in 1991, which has caused a decrease in seabird productivity.

So the take-home message was that we have been exploiting a rich resource while not understanding the effects, and with such a complex system it is often impossible to foresee these effects. While there is still a lot of work to be done, we are beginning to understand seabird ecology and fisheries a little better than we did.

The Congress was a fantastic event. Not only did I learn lots, but I was also able to make many new acquaintances and see many new sights.

Outside of Durban the atmosphere was far more relaxed. During our Field Day in the middle of the Congress we hired a vehicle and took a trip to a local nature reserve. During about three hours we managed to see around 40 species of birds as well as zebra, impala and gnu, which was not bad given that we had to identify each from a field guide. The sheer diversity of birds in South Africa is completely bogging. We did our own post-Congress tour around Natal and I left South Africa having seen over 390 species of birds in a month. I left South Africa with a head full of whirling thoughts from the Congress and images of sensationally colourful birds and people.

BRENT STEPHENSON

False Incubation by Song Thrush

Can any member put me on the track of some cases akin to the following one? During December 1998 a Song Thrush laid two eggs on the ground in the open. These were quickly lost, but the bird continued to sit on the exact spot each day over a period of three weeks, as if it was incubating. There was no nest, merely a slight depression in the grass lawn, up against a concrete footpath.

This took place in Princes Street, Auckland, beside the main library building of the University of Auckland. The small lawn is screened from the road by shrubs but overlooked by a window (not that of the writer, although I did witness the sitting bird on two occasions). I was told that the Song Thrush laid one egg on the ground which someone shifted into the shade of a bush, where it was abandoned. A second egg was then laid but was broken by lawn mowing.

Most of the "false incubation" occurred after both of these eggs had been lost. I noticed the bird on the ground with its wings partly extended and thought it might be sun-bathing, or that it could have flown against a window and been stunned. When disturbed by my approach it stood and ran a short distance, then paused watchfully without flying away. I made a second visit a week later, after receiving the independent report of the bird's odd behaviour.

There was no doubting the bird's attachment to the place where its eggs had been laid. In case anyone is able to comment, I can be reached by phone or fax on (09) 524 9234 or by email on mj.taylor@auckland.ac.nz.

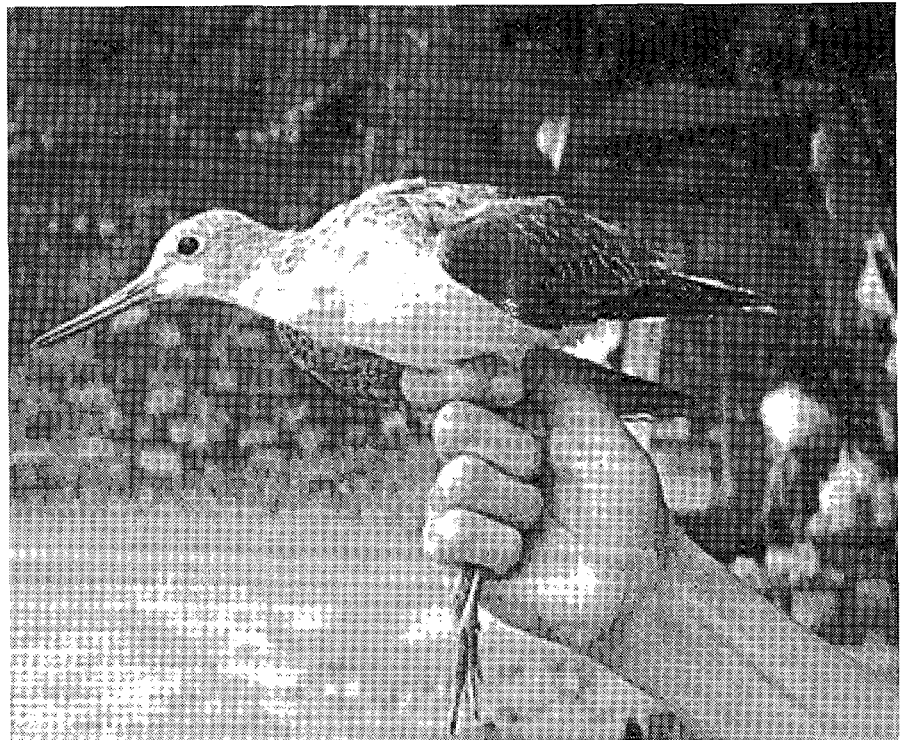
MICHAEL TAYLOR

Greenshank For Hire

Vietnam is a fascinating place for a holiday. We went on a non-birding one, and saw remarkably few species. One of our few close encounters with birds came at Hue, the old imperial capital. This is situated not far from the coast, in the narrow waist of the country about half way between its northern and southern borders.

We were in our bus visiting places of historic interest, and our next stop was to be an old pagoda. As we were nearing it, one of our party called out "Look at that bird". Someone else exclaimed "There's a cage full of them". After our visit to the pagoda I decided to run down the road to see what the birds were all about.

I didn't have time to find the cage and see what was in it, but the fellow with the bird, a Greenshank held fluttering by the legs, was easy to find. He couldn't speak English and our guide



Greenshank for Hire, Hue, Vietnam.

Photo: Hugh Clifford

was far away, but I made signs at the bird. I assumed it was for sale to eat. He indicated that the price was one US dollar, but he also made signs indicating the release of the bird.

Later, I told our guide about it and he confirmed that my guess as to what the vendor was indicating was probably correct. In this largely Buddhist country, people on their way to visit the pagoda could wish to gain merit through an act of kindness, so liberating a bird could be attractive.

It would be nice to learn more about catching and/or killing of waders for food or other purposes. And perhaps whoever visits there next could take a pile of recovery report forms from the Banding Office and ask the catchers/vendors to send one in for every banded bird they find.

HUGH CLIFFORD

(Recent issues of *The Stilt*, eg. Vol 32, pp.32-36, contain an assessment of the impacts of wader hunters, indicating a serious and increasing problem for migrating birds in China - Ed.)

Rapt with Raptors

Congratulations must go to Matthew Wong for the article Philipa Novak wrote for the *Wairarapa Times-Age*. Matthew described raptors - harriers, New Zealand Falcons - and Moreporks as "being powerful flyers and fierce hunters. Falcons have been clocked at 321 kmh by radar, so when they become sick or in-

jured they can be very hard to handle because of their hooked bill and long talons. Even hand-reared juveniles will scream and attack for food as they get older.

Matthew completed a Raptor Association certificate two years ago and has since attended other specialist classes. The DoC banding programme has allowed Matthew to band 200 harriers and enables dead birds to be identified. One of the birds he banded was found run over by a car in Ashburton 11 days later.

He has banded a falcon juvenile at the Pinnacles recently, and says that the birds should still be around there. Those of us who went to our local pot luck tea at Gloria and Donald's property last year had the opportunity to see the six year old female that Matthew has housed in a specially designed aviary. She has progressed well and is undergoing her final training before being released.

Miles King found a harrier injured with a broken leg on the Black Rock Road, which he gave to Matthew to care for. Matthew hollowed out a piece of polystyrene for the broken leg and bound it with bandages. The lightweight splint has worked beautifully, and the bird is now able to grasp with that foot which Matthew thought might have been paralysed.

She and another, hand-reared, bird will soon be going through the "hacking" procedure - becoming independent. The birds are taken to a suitable area for their release in a small box with a window at one end. Food is laid out and the window is opened. When the bird feels brave

enough to leave the box it gets a feed, and of course waits around for more, either at a roost nearby or even using the box as a roost. Slowly but surely the amount of food is cut, and the bird is driven by hunger to become able to fend for itself at its own pace. If this were not done the birds would simply fly off and possibly never be seen again.

Matthew says that he wants to work with harriers for a few more years before he works with falcons, as he believes that falcons are smarter and faster than harriers.

MILES KING

Rare Penguin at Pitt Island

While visiting the east coast of Pitt Island on 18 November 1998, we found a small crested penguin crossing the beach and climbing a bank above the sand. Immediately recognisable by its proportionately large, luxuriant and floppy yellow crests and lack of pink at the gape of the bill, this was an adult Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin. This taxon normally breeds in the Atlantic or Indian Oceans.

The taxon was first recorded in New Zealand at the nearest island to our sighting, South-East (Rangatira) Island in August 1968, with another possible sighting in November 1970. Subsequently an immature individual was found on the Wellington south coast in January 1984 (*Notornis* 31: 262-265).

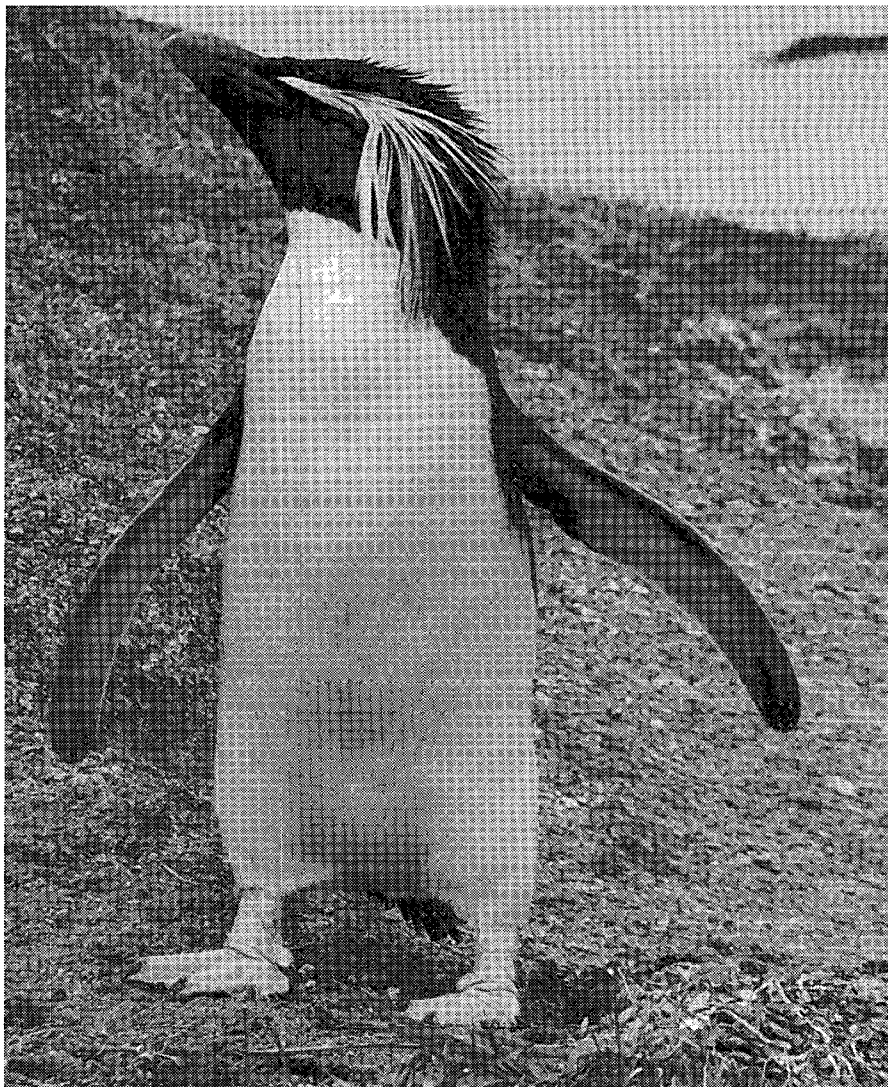
Though not seen again subsequently this summer, a crested penguin has reputedly been seen previously in a similar area by local residents during at least the previous year.

SANDRA KING & C.J.R. ROBERTSON

Identification of Common Tern

On 25 December, Jim Moore found a first year Common Tern at the Manawatu Estuary. The bird remained until at least 17 January, and was seen several times by Jim, myself and Brent Stephenson. A combination of our notes has been used here.

Brian Chudleigh in his illustrated article (*OSNZ News* 87) described the identification of Common Terns as "particularly nasty" - and having studied this bird I tend to agree, though "nasty" might properly be replaced by "tricky". My aim here is to shed some light on the necessarily brief notes in *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*, and to point to some helpful identification features, at least as exhibited by this bird.



Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin, Pitt Is.

Photo: CJR Robertson

Common Terns in New Zealand are most likely to be confused with White-fronted Terns - separation from Arctic Terns is a different (and possibly easier) problem. Breeding plumaged birds are quite straightforward given decent views, but non-breeding adults and immatures are harder. So where does one start? I guess the *Field Guide* description is the way to go.

The first line looks straightforward enough - "Like a small dark White-fronted Tern, but bill shorter and finer." The Manawatu bird was smaller and darker, but both these characters were, at times, hard to discern. When the bird was loosely associated with White-fronts it looked to be roughly the same size. Only when it was right next to them was the size difference noted, and in strong sunlight the colour of the back and wings was barely, only marginally, darker.

Of some assistance was a marked contrast between the grey feathering and white tips of the primary coverts, giving an impression of a grey-white-black progression towards the rear end. The closed primaries really were black - a solid black elongated triangle, and they

significantly lacked the white feather shafts that immature White-fronted Terns have.

The bill length was also a bit of a problem, since immature White-fronted Terns also have rather shorter bills than adults. The legs of our bird were black and of similar length to White-fronted Terns, though finer (and would be noticeably longer than Arctic). Common Terns are supposed to show a strong carpal bar, and indeed our bird did - but only some of the time! It was quite capable of more or less covering it up with a rearrangement of its feathers.

In flight the bird was much easier to pick out - extensive dark areas on both upper and lower wings led to an overall impression of a much darker bird, and the primaries had dark leading and trailing edges on the underside, leaving a pale triangle in the centre. The *Field Guide* description of the flight characteristics is, we think, a little misleading. The tempo and extent of the wingbeats seemed very similar to White-fronted, and although the flight may have been slightly more buoyant, this was by no means a helpful character.

We did note two things that helped to pick out the Manawatu bird from the other terns present when they were on the beach

- firstly, it would continually shuffle about, adjusting its position in a restless fashion, particularly if there was any wind blowing (perhaps due to its lesser bulk?), and secondly, it had a peculiar habit of tilting its head sideways to look up - perfectly illustrated in Brian Chudleigh's photograph at top right of *OSNZ News* 86 p.4. Having noticed this habit, I have been on the lookout for any White-fronted Terns that might do the same - without success.

I am grateful to Jim Moore for finding this bird in the first place - it was by no means easy to sort out, but it seems to me that Common Terns could be much more "common" than we know, and I hope that this article might encourage people to look a little more critically at bunches of terns on the beach, so that more might be found.

IAN SAVILLE

White Swallow

I took part in the annual summer wader count on 12 December at Lake Ellesmere, and the area assigned to me lies between the ends of Wolfes Road and the L II River near Selwyn Huts. This encompasses an extensive bay where many birds congregate to feed when conditions are favourable, as they were on this day. I observed a variety of waders including Wrybills, Banded Dotterels, Pied Stilts, Red-necked Stints, godwits and a single Pectoral Sandpiper.

After I had completed my count and was on the point of returning to Colin Hill's farm for our annual barbecue, I suddenly spotted a white swallow-like bird flying over the swamps in company with several Welcome Swallows. I was in no doubt that the bird could only have been an albino swallow, since the darting flight was typical and the size identical.

Although I was some distance away, I could see through my binoculars that the bird had dark grey feathering on the head, otherwise it was pure white. As I picked my way over the swampy terrain to get a closer look, the birds moved off, overflying me and gaining altitude. They flew over a nearby belt of trees and I lost sight of them.

I reported this unusual sighting to Colin Hill, who said that he would keep a lookout for the bird, but so far no further report has been made. Avian albinism is not unusual, but I am curious to know if any other member has seen an albino Welcome Swallow.

KATHLEEN HARRISON

One Good Tern...

Lloyd Esler's "one good tern deserves another" came true near New Plymouth this summer. It all started when Peter Fryer rang to tell me about a White-

winged Black Tern he had just seen feeding over the disused oxidation ponds at Bell Block, a suburb of New Plymouth.

This was on 7 November, and I went out promptly and found it still there for over an hour. It was apparently in the process of losing its breeding plumage as it was largely black below and white above, though this was all pretty patchy. It was seen on other occasions until I went out on 29 November and, after some initial confusion, decided I was looking at two of them.

The second bird was an almost all-white juvenile, and while it mostly remained independent, at times they seemed to feed together. They were both still there the next day as I tried to get some reasonable photos, and for this reason I went back again on the following day - and there were three! The third was almost identical to the second, another juvenile.

They were observed by several birders over the next three weeks, until on 22 December we were back to two birds, the two juveniles. On 10 January only one was seen, a week later for the last time.

BARRY HARTLEY

Spine-tailed Swift in Taranaki

On 3 December, Barry Hartley and I were at the mouth of the Pungaere Stream, near Rahotu in coastal Taranaki. At 11.55 am, while watching New Zealand Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers near the mouth of the stream, we noticed a bird flying southwards toward us, just in-shore of the tideline and only about 30 or so feet above the ground.

We initially thought it would be some sort of wader, but quickly realised it was flying wrongly for a wader (in a slow and somewhat erratic manner), that it was too dark in colour, and that it had long sickle-shaped wings. As it flew very close to us, with binoculars trained on it, we noticed its square tail and white vent area, and Barry observed short spikes projecting from its tail.

There is no doubt that it was a Spine-tailed Swift. It continued on down the coast and out of sight. This is the first record of a Spine-tailed Swift in north Taranaki since the 1994 individual I reported in *OSNZ News* 74 (March 1995).

DAVID MEDWAY

Magpie Marauder

How many of our readers have had the pleasure of watching a pair of Silvereyes feeding their chicks on a *macrocarpa* branch just outside their office window?

We have lived here for five years and this event this year became a pleasant morning treat. The pair of Goldfinches nesting in another tree out of our view was an added pleasure, but the Blackbirds that had nested before in the bamboo had not done so this year.

Imagine one's frustration at the arrival of a magpie that, in one morning, wiped out the young and eggs of all of these birds in less than a few minutes. The magpie landed at the Silvereyes' nest and swallowed the newly hatched young in seconds. That same morning the Goldfinches' nest was tilted and an egg lay on the grass below. A Song Thrush pair has a nest near a small creek at the bottom of the property but they had not laid.

The magpie moved on elsewhere and has not been back yet. I try to imagine how many nests it has robbed in this suburban area and the nearby park. I have read that this Australian bird is beneficial, but I have yet to find out how.

AMYAS RINGER

Unusual Gull Nest Sites

During regular kayak trip up the Mokau River estuary north of New Plymouth on 7 December 1997, I was surprised to see a pair of Black-backed Gulls with a nest on a large log - a whole tree really - which had come to rest on the mudflat during an earlier flood.

With the tide in they were surrounded by water, with the nearest bank at least 100m. away. Two days later there were two nests, each on their own log. After another flood one of the nests was lost, but the original one remained, though in a completely different location. Apparently being on the move wasn't a worry, and one fledgling was seen in the area on 20 January 1998.

This season another nest was seen on a log on 18 November, and five days later there were four nests, each on its own log and two on each side of the river. Two had three eggs each, one had two eggs but the other could not be checked.

By 29 December one nest had vanished, one appeared deserted and the other two had one and three fledglings respectively.

While nests have been recorded on logs, these have been on beaches or dune areas surrounded by dry land. In the cases recorded above the logs have been temporarily stranded on mudflats fifty metres or more from the nearest shore. While logs may move in flood conditions, during the summer they tend to drag across the shallows and resetttle as the levels drop. Usually the nests remain level - maybe the birds even enjoy the change of view!

BARRY HARTLEY

Birds' Names

Ian Saville's comments (*OSNZ News* 89) on common names for birds adopted in New Zealand reminded me of an experience of 15 years ago, when I reviewed for *Notornis* an Australian-produced book on the birds of Norfolk Island.

Although 80% of the species listed were shared with New Zealand, a large proportion had common names which differed to some degree. It seemed to me then that the main value of common names is lost when it becomes necessary to check the scientific name to see what bird is referred to. Regrettably, it seems that a plea made in my review, for closer cooperation between RAOU and OSNZ checklist committees, is as relevant now as it was in 1984.

Currently however I am more concerned over the trend toward common names formed by combining English and Maori words which effectively degrades both languages. An example currently in vogue is Chatham Island Taiko, which seems to be usurping *Magenta Petrel* as the common name for *Pterodroma magentae*. My understanding is that the Maori name for this bird is simply Taiko, but because the name is also used for the Black Petrel, the Chatham Island bird became known as the Taiko of the Chatham Islands. Although such usage is acceptable, I find its shortening to a hybrid name by the attachment of the English prefix Chatham Island to the Maori name Taiko quite abhorrent. I would be interested to hear the views of some of our Maori speaking members on this subject.

Now that the task of providing the *Checklist* with taxonomic synonymies and data on fossil and sub-fossil forms has been accomplished, it may be appropriate to broaden the range of experts on the Checklist Committee, so that more emphasis is placed on the treatment of common names.

JIM MOORE

I heartily disagree with Ian Saville's idea that we should use Australian/international English bird names. In fact, I would like to see the *Field Guide* go in the opposite direction and prefer Waxeye and Hedge Sparrow to Silvereye and Dunnock.

Surely we want New Zealanders to understand and feel comfortable with publications such as the *Field Guide*. That will be less likely if we abandon familiar names like Pukeko, Black Shag and White Heron, and replace them with strange ones few people have ever heard of.

Common names are not supposed to be international or taxonomically accurate - that is what scientific names are for. What would happen to the Bellbird, whose name is used overseas for entirely different birds? Would it simply become the New Zealand Bellbird,

or would it have to change altogether to fit the taxonomic strait-jacket?

Our "out of date, esoteric names" are actually very sensible in a New Zealand context. Pied Stilt and Red-billed Gull, for example, contrast appropriately with Black Stilt and Black-billed Gull, whereas the *HANZAB* names, Black-winged Stilt and Silver Gull, do not. Black-backed Gull is more distinctive and accurate than Kelp Gull.

Standardisation could be applied to obscure species like the Siberian Tattler, but let it stop there.

ALAN BAKER

Obituaries

Maxwell Lawrence Falconer 1929-1997

Max grew up in the Wairarapa town of Carterton, one of several brothers and sisters. From an early age he had a strong interest in birds, having kept a large collection of bantams, quail and pheasants to canaries and budgies.

During the early 1960s he and the writer attended a WEA course on New Zealand ornithology conducted by Brian Bell and Ken Miers in the Wairarapa. On shifting to the Hutt Valley in the mid 1960s, Max and I attended another course on New Zealand birds taken by Dr Peter Bull.

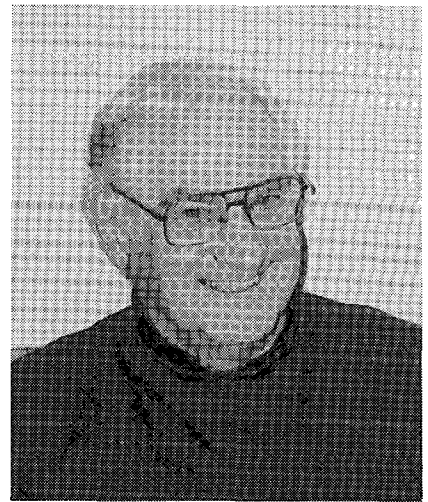
It was then that he joined OSNZ and soon made his presence felt. He became acting Regional Representative for six months from August 1972, during a time when the then RR Jim Fowler was working in the Antarctic. He became the RR from March 1974 until March 1979. He was Vice President of the Society from 1977 until 1981.

During this time as RR he organised the quarterly survey of birds on Kapiti Island over a three year period. The monthly survey of Wellington Harbour starting in 1975 and lasting three years was also organised.

He found time from 1969-1971 to help with the birds counts of Waikanae with the late Sir Charles Fleming, which resulted in a booklet *The Birds of Waikanae Estuary*.

In October 1973, together with the late Dr K.A. Wodzicki and Paul Kennedy, he worked on the Waikanae River and produced a paper *Waikanae River survey, changes to habitat and bird fauna, evidence from surveys 30 years apart*.

Under the leadership of Brian Bell, Max visited the Chatham Islands in early 1979 with the then Wildlife Department. He was always proud of the fact that he saw the entire population of a bird species, the then eight only Black Robins. Max was an integral part of several young ornithological expeditions to Farewell Spit, where his counsel was often sought.



M.L. Falconer.

Just before his death he was involved in local classified notes. He took on responsibility for looking after Morepork records in a preliminary study for the new *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand*.

Early in 1997 he started to assist Dr Richard Holdaway in excavations of moa bone sites at Puketeteri. He soon became Grand Master of the Riddler Guild. When he had finished his second trip, Max suddenly collapsed and died.

His funeral was in Carterton, attended by many OSNZ members. Eulogies were given by Brian Bell and Shane Cotter. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Ngaire, and sons Ashley, Clive and Harvey.

REG N. COTTER

Frank L. Newcombe 1910 - 1998.

Few members will remember Frank Newcombe, a long-standing member who died in December. Frank was a former Controller of the Wildlife Branch, Department of Internal Affairs (later the New Zealand Wildlife Service). Since his retirement from his official position, Frank had taken a quiet role in Wainuiomata.

Frank was a general naturalist, with perhaps botany as his main field of interest. He is more noted for his contribution to wildlife administration. He was the primary architect of the Wildlife Act (1953), which was a pioneering piece of legislation as it introduced "reverse listing", ie. listing those species not protected rather than those which are. This meant that any species which arrived in the country accidentally was automatically protected.

Perhaps his major contribution to ornithology was his effort to have the New Zealand Wildlife Service take more interest in protected birds than in game birds and freshwater fisheries, although he never neglected these, and he had a high profile with the Acclimatisation Societies. Under Frank, the research into the Takahe and Kakapo began, and he took part in several field expeditions. He encouraged his protected fauna staff to

the Takahe and Kakapo began, and he took part in several field expeditions. He encouraged his protected fauna staff to participate in the activities of the Society and this made it practical for the two organisations to work together in several early field study courses and surveys, such as those on Farewell Spit. He will be missed by his friends and former colleagues who respected his sincerity and wise counsel.

BRIAN D. BELL

Blue Penguin Symposium

Friday 18 June 1999, Lindis Room, Brydone Hotel, Oamaru.

This is a day-long scientific meeting, supported by Oamaru's Blue Penguin colony. Registration is open to anyone interested in the biology of penguins and costs NZ\$10.00, which covers lunch, morning and afternoon tea and a book of abstracts of the presentations.

Apart from the importance of this biennial national meeting, Oamaru has its own attraction as a coastal town, with its magnificent Victorian limestone buildings in classical style. The penguin colony is open every evening, with experienced and informative guides. This much studied population forms the basis of local work which will be presented at the symposium.

Programme

- 0845 - opening
- 0900-0940 - Palaeontology, Prof. Ewan Fordyce.
- 0945-1025 - Good year, bad year, Dr Chris Lalas.
- 1030-1045 - morning tea.
- 1045-1110 - Penguins in Oamaru, Dave Houston.
- 1110-1135 - Taiaroa Head, Lyndon Perriman.
- 1135-1200 - Motunau Island, Dr Chris Challies.
- 1200-1225 - Wellington Harbour, Leigh Bull.
- 1225-1245 - discussion.
- 1300-1400 - lunch.
- 1400-1415 - Diet by gastric lavage, Dr Chris Lalas, Maree Fraser.
- 1420-1435 - Foraging times, Dr Lloyd Davis, Mihoko Numata.
- 1440-1455 - Autopsy cause of death, Tony Hocken.
- 1500-1530 - afternoon tea.
- 1530-1600 - Site fidelity, Janis Russell.
- 1610-1640 - Predation, Dr Chris Challies.
- 1655 - closing remarks.
- 1900 for 1930 - conference dinner, Brydone Hotel.

Further information, registration forms (which MUST be received by 7 June) and accommodation information are available from the Convenor.

A.G. Hocken

"East Riding"

Whiterocks Road

RD6 Oamaru

Tel/fax (03) 434 8188

Email agh@es.co.nz

Birds New Zealand newsgroup

The purpose of the group is to share experiences and matters of interest related to New Zealand birdlife. There is no cost to subscribing to the newsgroup as it is an entirely voluntary concept. Accordingly it is not a platform for any profit-making ventures.

In particular this is an ideal medium to report unusual bird sightings before they disappear again. Birds New Zealand is however by no means restricted to sightings, and is expected to include such items as unusual behaviour, breeding successes and disappointment, meetings, projects, new groups etc. The idea came from a similar newsgroup which covers Oregon, Washington and British Columbia.

Initially I shall collate all information received into a weekly digest which will usually be sent on Friday nights or Saturday mornings. Material will be obtained from whatever sources are available, but the most important source will be you, the subscriber. To contribute, just email your report to birds@clear.net.nz.

The bulletins will be forwarded in html format. If you prefer to receive these in plain text, please let me know. If you have any comments or suggestions, please use the same address.

SIMON FORDHAM

birds@clear.net.nz

Birding Spots and Miranda Photos

If you have a special birding place which warrants inclusion on my *Birding Places* book which is in preparation, could you send it to me, along with a rough map and key bird species. Access notes should be included and whether permission is required to enter. Places should have ease of public access and be able to be located by people of moderate fitness. All entries will be acknowledged.

Any old photos or Miranda or Miranda events would be welcome for consideration in a planned history of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust - *The First 25 Years*. These can include people, places or birds.

Please send either of the above to:

STUART & ALISON CHAMBERS

187G Clarks Beach Road

RD4 Pukekohe

Ph. (09) 232 0188

Fax (09) 232 0190

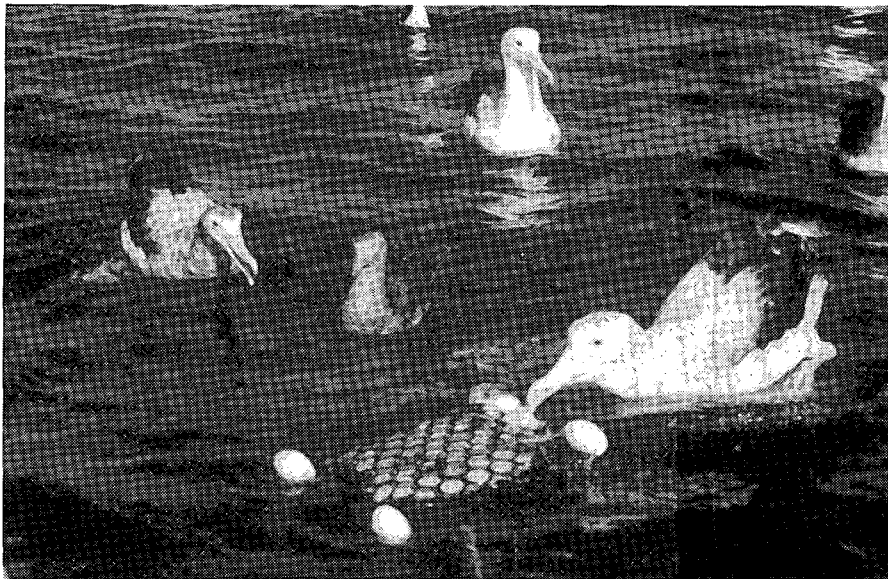
OceanWings - a pelagic experience

After a pleasant post-Christmas interlude among the culinary and viticultural scenery of Marlborough, a hot, sunny New Years Eve provided a very special late afternoon birding experience at sea off Kaikoura. Well known for its whale watching and dolphin encounters, marine tourism has changed the small fishing village of Kaikoura enormously in recent years.

A few keen OSNZers have been aware for some time of the ease of access to some of our more spectacular pelagic birds close to the coast. Off the Kaikoura Peninsula in the vicinity of the continental shelf and marine canyons which provide such a rich environment for visiting whales, pelagic seabirds come close to the coast. An enterprising offshoot from the dolphin swimming and encounter tourism operation, now provides a pelagic birding opportunity which will not be matched as conveniently anywhere else in the world.

OceanWings runs a 2-3 hour tour from Kaikoura using a fast boat to ensure that the best viewing areas (about 7 nautical miles SE of the peninsula with a water depth of about 200m.) are reached rapidly. Even away from the coast the ever-present Black-backed Gull was still about and a few mollymawks were seen in the distance as we progressed out to sea in light winds and a pleasantly smooth ocean. The boatman had operated in the area both as a fisherman and tour boat driver for more than 20 years and was well versed in the range of species we were about to experience.

Out at the "best spot" there was initially little to see except the gulls. However, the placing of some "mature" shark liver offal in a half square metre mesh bag with a float at each corner soon produced significant results. The bag floated about two metres from the stern of the boat and the next two hours passed rapidly as a remarkable display of procellariiformes arrived to participate in the feeding, or to watch the bigger



Antipodean Albatrosses and Northern Giant Petrel, off Kaikoura, December 1998

Photo: CJR Robertson.

“fellas” hog the fare. Three Antipodean (Wandering) Albatrosses were the most aggressive and got the lion’s share of the feast. Less aggressive were 2-3 Northern and Southern Royals who tended to sit off from the Antipodeans, but uttered and continuous, threatening grumble.

Any loose food material away from the bag produced flurries of mollymawks and smaller petrels, including both taxa of Black-browed Mollymawks, Salvin’s and White-capped Mollymawks, giant, White-chinned, Westland and Grey-faced Petrels, Flesh-footed and Sooty Shearwaters plus occasional Grey-backed Storm Petrels Not seen on this occasion were any of the smaller shearwaters or Cape Pigeons which are normally present. Returning via the coast and small offshore rocks, breeding colonies of Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns and Spotted Shags were closely observed. The whole trip provided many opportunities for close-up photography of a wide range of species normally only seen as illustrations in books.

The operators of the tour indicate that so far they have had few New Zealanders, but a growing number of enthusiastic overseas observers. I can confirm the latter, having met a number who visited Kaikoura before adding the mainland penguins and albatrosses to their ornithological experiences. The operators advise that the birds are viewable throughout the year, but that the winter months (May to September) provide the greatest variety. Fares are from \$60 for adults and \$35 for a child. I understand also that special tours can be arranged. Further information can be obtained from freephone 0800 733 365 or email info@oceanwings.co.nz.

Whether travelling independently or as a group, this seabird experience guarantees special viewing in a part of what is truly the seabird capital of the world.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

Regional Roundup

Auckland

In the last six months we have lost three long-term members from our ranks. Murray Jones died in July 1998, Betty Binning in November and very recently Pat Crombie, in February 1999. All three will be sadly missed for the contributions they have made to the region and to ornithology in New Zealand.

Speakers at our last meetings covered a variety of ornithological topics. Since there has been no contribution to *OSNZ News* from our region for the last three issues, I will recap briefly. Debbie Stewart-Badger from Rotorua spoke about the work of Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust in March 1998. Hugh Clifford shared his encounters with Gould’s and Grey-faced Petrels in April, and in May Mel Galbreath outlined his year’s work as a Science and Technology Research Fellow of the Royal Society. Mel also led a very successful follow-up field trip around the urban reserve he had studied.

Stephen Davies gave an outstanding talk in June covering the form and function of feathers, leading to a fascinating explanation of moult and how it relates to migration strategy of waders. July saw us all on safari in Western Australia with John Dowding, an ecological expedition with some lovely human touches. Paul Rose, a recent ornithological acquisition from Canada, shared some amazing bird-in-the-hand slides taken during his time at Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario. The national Kaka research project was Terry Greene’s subject in September and Peter Jenkins delivered something a little different (*Song of the Sea*) at our October meeting.

Andrea Booth’s dedication to seabirds came across strongly at our November meeting, when, fresh from a Mercury

Islands trip, she shared her Bounty Islands experience with us. At our festive December meeting Dianne Brunton spoke about her research on colonies of Least Tern on the US east coast. 1999 got off to a historic start in February with David Medway addressing both Auckland and South Auckland meetings.

The April 1998 NZ Dabchick census, capably organised by Chris Bindon, recorded 43 dabchicks. With increased rainfall in recent years and huge sections of Muriwai Forest clear-felled, the middle lake chain is once again a viable habitat for this species, as it was in the late 70s and early 80s. Stralia’s Refuge produced a variety of waterfowl in May on a trip led by John Kendrick, with a good sized flock of Grey Teal seen. A group visited Mangawhai Heads’ Caspian Tern colony on Labour Weekend and recorded 11 chicks and 41 active nests.

A highly unusual “bird” was located on the beach in October by Gordon Gorbey and Rae McGregor which caused us to laugh all the way to Rae’s home for a barbecue at the end of the day. Someone suggested that it might be a relative of the current RR, as its mouth was permanently open. Another wag suggested the nickname “Monica” for someone’s former inflatable friend.

A very successful NZ Dotterel workshop was facilitated by John Dowding in October - unfortunately numbers had to be limited to the already dedicated dotterel watchers.

The summer wader censuses were well supported, in spite of a clash with another regional project. At Mangawhai 8 Fairy Terns and 10 Red-necked Stints were recorded (three pairs of terns attempted to nest later in the month). The south Kaipara Harbour produced a handful of rarities, including a Mongolian Dotterel, Large Sand Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Far-eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, tattler, Terek Sandpiper, Grey Plover and Sanderling. Numbers of Pacific Golden Plovers have doubled each season since 1996 (to 100) and thanks must go to Adrian Riegen for the excellent analysis of wader counts which he consistently produces. Of the ten Fairy Terns recorded on the south Kaipara census day, four were actively nesting at Papakanui Spit. Yet again, nests for these west coast breeding birds were located as early as 5 November.

From the unusual sightings/happenings department the following - a fairly sound sighting of a bustard was reported to members of the Society at Muriwai in October. In spite of diligent searching by several members, there have been no further sightings of this bird. A Pallid Cuckoo was seen at Tawharanui and a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was reliably reported in Onehunga. A new roosting site for Sulphur-crested Cockatoos has been located at Paremoremo. Spotless Crakes and a bittern nest containing two young were

recorded in Bethells Swamp. Two pairs of Shore Plovers nested in the wild at Motuora Island and one was successful. A Shore Plover juvenile was sighted at Waiwera in June 1998 and it has remained there all summer, going into breeding plumage. Kokako have bred successfully on Tiritiri Matangi Island this season, and a Tomtit turned up there recently, probably wind-blown from Little Barrier Island. A SIPO/VOC hybrid, leg-flagged in Canterbury, was sighted at Big Sand Island, Tapora (is it a SIVOC or a VPO?).

A pair of NZ Dotterels on the Waitemata Harbour has set about raising a second batch of chicks after successfully fledging the first, and all within three kilometres (as the dotterel flies) of the Sky Tower. A rare tern has been sighted at Papakanui Spit by Darryl Jeffries and a report forwarded to the Rare Birds Committee.

Auckland Zoo captive-reared six NZ Dotterels and two Fairy Terns this summer. The dotterels were released at Stillwater and the terns at Mangawhai. Within 48 hours of release, one of the Fairy Tern youngsters was sighted by DoC staff at Papakanui spit, making this the second instance of a bird that was incubated, hatched and fledged elsewhere returning to the site where it had begun life as an egg.

Muriwai Beach patrols have not produced a rarity in the last six months, but John Simmons is providing good feedback to members and the patrol will switch from Sunday to Saturday later in the year. A huge wreck of diving petrels was recorded on the east coast late in December. Nearly 650 birds were picked up from Pakiri, Mangawhai and Waipu south beaches, including some Cook's Petrels and two Black-winged Petrels. It is rumoured that a beach-wrecked Gould's Petrel was found at Mangawhai by DoC staff, and also a breeding adult Fairy Tern.

The Auckland region of OSNZ has been faced with yet another change of venue for 1999. The Kohia Teachers' Centre has now shifted to the grounds of the Auckland College of Education, 74 Epsom Ave, Mt Eden. It is just inside Gate 1, and there is ample parking in front of the new building.

Hopefully the epistle from the Auckland region will be far shorter and more frequent in the future.

(Gwenda Pulham)

South Auckland

The main interest in the South Auckland region at the moment is the full complement of waders in the Firth of Thames and the Manukau Harbour. Keith Woodley from the Miranda Naturalists' Trust reports that he has a good selection of birds on the shellbanks.

These include six Pacific Golden Plovers, two tattlers, two Terek Sandpipers, eight Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, three Marsh Sandpipers, a Pectoral Sandpiper, an Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit, three Red-necked Stints, an Eastern Curlew and five Little Terns.

In the Manukau Harbour on the Kidds shellbanks there is regularly a flock of approximately 10-15,000 Red Knots with 3,000 Bar-tailed Godwits. With the return of the South Island Pied Oystercatchers roost space is at a premium during high tides. Scattered amongst this flock are 40 Pacific Golden Plovers, 10 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, eight Curlew Sandpipers, 24 Red-necked Stints, 11 Little Terns, a White-winged Black Tern, six Eastern Curlews and three Great Knots.

The black-billed Gull nesting colony at Miranda was washed out early in the nesting season and the birds abandoned that site. They showed some interest in the Manukau Harbour but never proceeded with nesting. The colony at Papakanui Spit on the South Kaipara Head expanded considerably. These are probably some of the birds which moved from southern colonies to boost the usual numbers. Tony Habraken has banded 24 chicks and also discovered some of last year's Miranda chicks in the Kaipara Harbour.

On the people front there has also been a migration, but unfortunately in a one way direction. Pam and Des Agnew have moved to Perth, and this left major gaps in the South Auckland organisation. However conscripts have been found to fill the roles, with Stuart Chambers becoming the regional recorder and Rob Wheeler taking over the beach patrols. It took five people to take all the jobs that Pam and Des had undertaken in the region. Also migrating from the area is Elaine Ward who is moving to Tauranga.

At the meeting on 9 February David Medway provided an interesting talk on the ornithological aspects of the three visits of Captain Cook to New Zealand. David brought to life the many discoveries that Cook's naturalists made and gave an interesting insight into the origin of the naming of those "new" birds.

(David Lawrie)

Waikato

Captain Cook and his team of naturalists provided fascinating information for our November meeting. Not that Captain Cook was actually there with us, but David Medway described the ornithological results of the good captain's second voyage to New Zealand. What a fascinating time it was in history, with the exploration of this part of the world resulting in the recording of vast numbers of species of plants and animals previously unknown to science. After collecting the specimen (in the case of birds "collecting" seems to have always been a handy euphemism for shooting) followed the

examination, description, classification and naming. How interesting to follow some of these early steps on the road to where our knowledge is today.

November was the month for our usual summer harbours census. As this is weather-dependent it is often a nightmare to organise. This time the weather was reasonable, and with four boats and 15 people we covered our three west coast harbours - Aotea, Kawhia and Raglan - as planned. Our records of these twice-yearly censuses go back as far as 1976 for the Kawhia winter census, but are less complete for the other harbours and times. Summaries for some of the time periods have been published by Adrian Plant and Paul Cuming in *OSNZ News* previously. Now a paper covering the whole period of the censuses is in preparation for the forthcoming wader supplement.

In December we had our usual very successful pot luck dinner, enlivened by some entertainment which included a couple of quizzes. The author of one quiz was embarrassed to find that he had handed out sheets of answers instead of questions to some people. When this was pointed out, the answers were hurriedly retrieved, and though there were some pretty good scores, no group managed to get 100%.

Our regular surveys of the two lakes in Hamilton have continued each month, as have beach patrols. Our members carried out 46 beach patrols during 1998. Live birds are recorded as well as dead ones. In this past year the sea has been encroaching on our west coast beaches, so stream mouths which sometimes have extensive areas of sand flat seldom covered by water now have almost none. This has made it difficult for Variable Oystercatchers, New Zealand Dotterels and Banded Dotterels to find nesting sites safe from the sea.

Banding of Grey-faced Petrel chicks was carried out on nine nights between 12 December and 6 January, with the highest numbers to date being banded at each of our two study sites.

In January some of our members joined a DoC summer programme trip to Whale Island, near Whakatane. This is a rapidly changing island, with vegetation recovering after the removal of mammals, and with missing species of birds and reptiles being introduced.

A person who located a magpie trap on pasture land which is being developed for low density housing reported that he caught 220 magpies at that site during 1998.

It is usual to receive reports of Kaka in various parts of the Waikato during winter/spring, and from August to November there were reports from Waerenga, Gordonton, Morrinsville, Matamata, the largest group being four birds. One report stated that a group of three seemed to be keeping the magpies away - New Zealand fauna strikes back?

Another example of NZ fauna strikes back was a Morepork terrorising budgies in an outside aviary and managing to injure one through the wire.

A number of reports of NZ Falcons were received from the Pirongia Forest Park from June to November. In one case a falcon was chasing a Kereru when both flew into a window. Both birds then flew away.

(Hugh Clifford)

Bay of Plenty

I am sad to record the death of Roy Weston, long-standing Regional Representative for the Bay of Plenty. A full obituary will appear in *OSNZ News* in due course.

A few rarities have been seen around the Kaituna Cut and Maketu Estuary areas, including Marsh and Pectoral Sandpipers. There has been a reported sighting of an Asiatic Dowitcher, but this is being elusive and cannot be confirmed. Up to 31 Cattle Egrets were seen by several people near the Rangitaiki rivermouth in September and October.

Paddy Latham hosted the annual barbecue, always an enjoyable event. He gave an interesting account of his recent trip to Sulawesi in Indonesia.

A joint activity to look for Banded Dotterels happened a week earlier than planned, which meant that we missed it: The summer wader census was carried out by nine members. This is a big undertaking, with over 14 different places being covered from Bowentown to the Motu Estuary.

I have been out of action for the past few months because of an infection in my spine. This curtailed my enthusiasm and my involvement in many activities, but Margaret says my bounce is slowly returning now.

(John Brierley)

Volcanic Plateau

The topic of our December meeting held in Rotorua was rat eradication on the Pitcairn islands. Kerry gave an interesting account of his two trips to the Pitcairn group with great slides of the endemic birdlife. Adding to the authenticity of his talk his Pitcairn Island partner was present to make sure no errors in the narration were made. Rat eradication has been successful on two of the four islands, but Pitcairn Island itself is still in doubt.

Our region's Banded Dotterel survey was conducted in November and December with trips to Mt Tarawera, Sulphur Bay, Tongariro Delta, Tokaanu-Waihi lake shore, Turangi oxidation ponds and the Rangipo Desert. Gull and wader counts were conducted at the same time with varied results:

Mt Tarawera - Banded Dotterel 4
Black-backed Gulls
1,000+, 700+ nests

Sulphur Bay Black-billed Gull 369,
381 nests
Red-billed Gull 1438
adults, 608 juv, 155 nests
Black-backed Gull 144,
84 nests
Banded Dotterel, 2 pairs,
2 juv

Pied Stilt, 22, 1 juv

Tongariro Delta Pied Stilt 36

Black-billed Gull 40
(nesting)

Black-backed Gull 23, 15
juv

Turangi oxidation ponds Pied Stilt 30

Tukino River Banded Dotterel 9

Mangatoetoe Valley Banded Dotterel
2

Local DoC offices have agreed to assist with our dotterel survey by recording sightings while in the field, and have subscribed to our local newsletter.

Our membership has grown this year, with one junior and two senior members joining in the latter part of 1998. In December Robyn Skelton spent some time on Chatham Is assisting with Chatham Island Oystercatcher work.

In November Kerry gave assistance to an American exchange-student studying annual productivity of Blue Ducks on the Manganui-a-te-ao River and was busy in January showing tourists kiwi in Waimarino Forest in conjunction with the DoC summer nature programme. A Blue Duck survey in December of three rivers affected by hydro intakes in their headwaters resulted in a total of two pairs and two individuals on the upper Whanganui River, one pair and three individuals on the Whakapapa Stream and no birds on the upper Mangatepopo Stream. No breeding was detected during the survey.

(Kerry Oates)

Gisborne/Wairoa

Smaller than usual numbers of waders were present during the November survey covering the Waiapoa/Muriwai, Mahia and Whakaki Lagoon areas. The mud deposited on the northern bank of the Waiapoa River on either side of the rail bridge is proving a rich feeding ground for waders. Birds included a New Zealand Dotterel, 64 Banded Dotterels, five Wrybills and 25 Pacific Golden Plovers. Whakaki Lagoon is full this year, in contrast to last year when it was almost empty.

Three recent walks along the Ruapani Track, Urewera National Park, were very rewarding. In two hours you pass the Waipai Swamp on the way to Lake Ruapani. Birds in November, December

and January were North Island Robin, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Cuckoo, NZ Pigeon, Fantail, Rifleman, Silveryeye, Kaka, Whitehead, Grey Warbler, Tui, Bellbird, parakeets, Tomtit, NZ Kingfisher, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Chaffinch, with Paradise Shelduck and Grey Duck on the lake. Apart from the birds there were many species of orchids and mistletoe in flower.

(Geoff Foreman)

Hawkes Bay

There doesn't seem to have been much active birdwatching in Hawkes Bay this summer. I can't say I blame anyone - the extreme temperatures certainly haven't been conducive to birding, especially at the Ahuriri Estuary. We may have to be more careful in the future with the possibility of those exotic mosquitoes lurking about.

The November census didn't produce anything startling, although birders out of our region may be envious of 159 Little Black Shags at Ahuriri and a further 196 at Clive. Of the more interesting sightings were five Royal Spoonbills still at the Ahuriri, along with 21 Pacific Golden Plovers, a White-winged Black Tern and an Australasian Bittern. At Waitangi there was a breeding colony of c.700 Black-billed Gulls and c.1500 White-fronted Terns, with 26 and c.550 respectively at Porangahau. Also at Porangahau were six Wrybills, 14 Red-necked Stints and 264 Bar-tailed Godwits.

Several local members stayed at Miranda for five nights during January. A wonderful trip with many interesting species, as well as the huge, restless flocks of birds. Highlights were Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Terek Sandpipers, a tattler, Eastern Curlews, Marsh Sandpipers, Little Terns, a golden plover, as well as at least three Banded Rails. The rails were at Access Bay and the Limeworks, very conveniently seen from parked cars.

One day was set aside for a trip over to Tiritiri Matangi Island. Some of us had visited before when we planted some trees, so we were interested to see the growth and the effect on bird numbers. Our first indication was when we stepped onto the pier and were greeted with Saddleback song. That evening, Keith Woodley at Miranda announced the arrival of a new book for sale in the shop - *The Singing Island* by Lynette Moon. Some of us found the temptation too great.

(Wayne Twydle)

Taranaki

Members enjoyed visiting the Manawatu River estuary at Foxton in November, and a great variety of birds was seen and photographed. The December field trip was a tramp along the Mangorei track to the Pouakai hut, in Egmont National Park. All common bush birds were seen

and heard. This branch does not meet in January, but our February trip will be to the 220 ha Collier QEII bush covenant.

At the December meeting Ron Lambert, the director of the Taranaki Museum, allowed members into the basement to view the large collection on New Zealand and other bird specimens.

Banded Dotterels have been returning to the Waiongana Rivermouth in greater numbers at each sighting. 70+ were there at the beginning of February. Since late December increasingly larger flocks of SIPOs have been reportedly flying north and we have one report of the birds calling at night. Numbers started at 30+. Maybe the west coast is the favoured route for the annual migration. High numbers of Pied Stilts have been reported at several sites along the coast

Observations of interest during December include continual sightings of 3+ White-winged Black Terns, with a few Grey Teal, at a disused coastal oxidation pond. The latter are not often seen in north Taranaki. At sea, large numbers of gannets have been moving along the coast, and a flock of 50+ were roosting on a prominent rock in the marine park. Flesh-footed, Fluttering and Buller's Shearwaters are regularly seen in good numbers, along with two skua species. Reef Herons have been observed along the coast, with three fledglings on rocks in the marine park.

Other interesting records include a Fork-tailed Swift in the city area, and a Spine-tailed Swift on the coast near the Pungaereere Stream. A pet dog was attacked by a NZ Kingfisher and another by a Pukeko! A recently dead Bellbird was found on the ice in the crater of Mt Egmont and many species of insect were observed in the summit area on the same day.

Members tramping in the national park report unusually large numbers of Whiteheads. Early in December a small flock was seen on a farm property some distance from the national park. One Long-tailed Cuckoo was observed in a private garden and it seems that these birds have been more plentiful in Taranaki this summer. One bird was heard calling in early February. It would seem from records that the adverse weather earlier in the season has had little effect on bird populations.

The most exciting record is of the first documented successful breeding of New Zealand Dotterel in Taranaki - refer to the RR's forthcoming article.

(Rosemary Messenger)

Wanganui

On 22 November a group of us went to Christies Lake in search of Spotless Crakes. We had some response to a tape recording and a few brief glimpses - enough to show us that they are still in this area, as they had not been seen for some time.

On 6 January Colin Ogle reported some 100 Pied Stilts on the Wanganui Estuary. This is the largest number seen in this area for some years. Members have reported that the Turakina Estuary has become a good spot for observing waders, such as Pied Stilts, Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels, godwits, knots, Variable Oystercatchers, plus Caspian Terns etc. A Greenshank has been reported, not yet positively identified though it has come from a reliable source.

On 16 January an adult NZ Scaup was seen at Victoria Lake with four chicks. This is a first for the lake.

(Tom Teasdale)

Wairarapa

Instead of the song "The Cat Comes Back" it should perhaps be "The birds come back, the very same day, they couldn't stay away". This fits the thinking of most of the orchardists and vintners of the Wairarapa and perhaps New Zealand.

Our group has undertaken a study of bird damage and methods of control. Although we are not far into the research, it has been a surprise to most of us to discover the expense some of the orchardists and vintners are having to go to in order to protect their crops. Electronic noise, guns, balloons, kites, owl and falcon silhouettes or models are just some of the methods being used to scare birds. It is probably more accurate to say shift the problem from one orchard to the next and back again.

Coinciding with this study we have had guest speakers applicable to this subject. Tom Caithness gave us a memorable talk on bird expulsion from airports and orchards. Nick Porter, a crop scientist, is to give us field instructions on estimating damage to crops.

The local newspaper recently published several articles on our Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre. Their breeding success with Kaka, as well as their award of top honour in ecotourism and a British Airways tourism award are great achievements.

15 year old Gabrielle Drummond of Masterton, who rescued a White-faced Heron which had fallen 20 metres from a nest in a kahikatea and which is now being fed dog food and worms, appeared in the paper mid January. The other major press item was on Matthew Wong and his capture, handling and training experiences with harriers. This near full

page article was interesting, informative and a credit to Matthew.

(Miles King)

Manawatu

Summer birding in the region was once again dominated by the Foxton Beach area, with the only really interesting report from outside the area being two probable Red-crowned Parakeets seen in the Pongahina Valley.

The influx of Pacific Golden Plovers noted in the last issue dispersed slightly, but left around 45 birds, which is roughly a 100% increase on last summer. Sharp-tailed Sandpipers have also shown a welcome increase in numbers compared to recent years, with nine individuals present, often in the company of five Pectoral Sandpipers. The resident Grey-tailed Tattler remains, and there have been up to seven Red-necked Stints. Another flagged Red Knot was seen at the end of November, this one a green - Queensland - bird.

January was tern month at the estuary, with no less than six species present. A first year Common Tern from 25 December to 17 January was the highlight for rarity, but a breeding plumaged White-winged Black Tern had to be the best looking bird. Two other less pretty ones were also seen, along with single Black-fronted and Little Terns and the usual White-fronteds and Caspians.

As last year, we lay claim to Foxton Beach being the best birding site with the most species recorded in the country - between Jim Moore and myself we can make 85 species in the 1998 calendar year.

(Ian Saville)

Wellington

In overcast, windy conditions on 22 November, 25 members from Wellington and Manawatu branches visited the Manawatu Estuary. Good views were had of Red-necked Stint, Siberian Tattler, Pectoral Sandpiper and Pacific Golden Plover, amongst more common species.

The December meeting commenced with pre-Christmas fare, after which Chris Robertson reported on the IOC in Durban and his visits to various museums around the world looking at albatrosses. Chris also visited a Cape Gannet colony where there were 70,000 pairs. These birds nest at twice the density of Australasian Gannets.

A three day field trip in January took ten members to Kaikoura, primarily to view pelagic species but including much intensive birding. We had excellent views of Salvin's, Black-browed and White-capped Mollymawks, Westland and White-chinned Petrels, Hutton's, Buller's and Sooty Shearwaters and Cape Pigeons,

in addition to more familiar species. In nearby Kowhai Bush, besides robins, Brown Creepers, Riflemen and Redpolls, we were able to observe two fledgling Shining Cuckoos being fed by their harassed Grey Warbler foster-parents. We were less successful in searching for Gull Buntings on Jack Taylor's property near Ward.

Appropriately, our first meeting this year was given over to Hugh Robertson to review our ornithological habits in the field, including our note-taking. He even tested our identification skills - with characteristic humour and understanding.

There are many activities current or planned. Despite the efforts of our volunteers there were problems again this year feeding the Common Diving Petrel chicks on Mana Island. While the dietary mystery is being resolved, there will be no further transfers. Focus will shift to a search for returning birds and banding any unbanded arrivals.

Members will band robins and Sooty Shearwaters on Mana, and around April will follow up pest eradication on Kapiti Island with the first of a series of five minute bird counts. In March a day trip is planned to the Sounds, including Moturoa Island (for Saddlebacks) and, weather permitting, King Shags.

In the meantime the harbour survey continues, with the only noteworthy change in December being an increase in the number of terns and Red-billed Gulls.

(Rod Orange)

Nelson

A meeting in December was devoted to hearing of Rob Schuckard's recent trip to Western Australia and participation on the wader banding programme. He came back enthused with the potential of cannon netting and flagging our Arctic waders to enhance our knowledge. We discussed the best places for this activity, where the gear would come from and at what cost, and also how this could be set up within the Society and used for the training of members. Much work is still needed on this proposal but I am sure it will come to fruition.

David Melville, a wader enthusiast and well known ornithologist from Hong Kong, visited briefly and mentioned plans to settle in Nelson later this year - a move which bodes well for the work of the Society in Nelson.

Farewell Spit activity has continued with observations on the gannet colony and an extra summer census (in February) which drew in greater numbers of some species than are usually recorded in November.

Later in the year members hope to be involved with three species transfers proposed by the Department of Conservation - Red-crowned Parakeet to

Maud Island, Saddleback to Allports and Mohua to the Inner Chetwode.

For much of the past year a male Mandarin Duck was resident on the local duckpond. Then in mid December, a female Australian Wood Duck appeared in the Nelson yacht marina. Hardly typical habitat for this species, but it seems to thrive in the salt water with the local Mallards and regular feeding from those living onboard.

The third report comes from a young woman who was at the techno dance rave held on the top of the Takaka Hill over new year. I must admit to a degree of scepticism over her description: "There was this big grey bird out in the paddock. It had black spots all over and a fluorescent green bill with a black outline. Its legs were red and it had these great big webbed feet. We first became aware of it when we heard this noise that sounded like someone trying to start a two-stroke." The next day a local farmer called in to complain about a Cape Barren Goose that was giving his sheep dogs a hard time. Some of these Australian vagrants certainly make an impact.

(Peter Gaze)

Canterbury

510 Black billed Gull chicks were banded at this year's Ashley River colony, along with 134 at Peacock Springs, making a very useful total to add to last year's birds. They are banded with a blue or white colour band on the right leg (last year the colour band was on the left leg) and metal on the left and are now being recorded from various places in the greater Christchurch area. Around a dozen or more members were at each banding trip in late December-early January, with excellent coverage of one trip in *The Press*. With Black-billed Gulls banded near Auckland and in Canterbury and Southland, please keep an eye out for banded birds in your region.

The survey for gull colonies was dogged with difficulties - two colonies were counted on the Hurunui and one on the Waiiau, though the former were lost to floods. South Canterbury members also counted colonies.

The Ashburton River was surveyed by a good sized group on 28 November. Among the expected Banded Dotterels, Pied Stilts, SIPO, ducks, shags and herons, were a surprisingly low 18 Black-fronted Dotterels, as well as 1500 Black-billed Gulls (777 nests), 20 Black-fronted Terns and, near the mouth, three Wrybills, six Turnstones and three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Also present were 2-3,000 Black-backed Gulls.

The wader survey on the weekend of 12 and 13 December covered the usual Canterbury haunts - Lake Ellesmere, Ashley and Avon-Heathcote Estuaries and rivers from the Waipara to Lake Kīwainono. Among the totals, highlights were 39 Royal Spoonbills, 41+ Variable

Oystercatchers (and a banded hybrid SIPO/VOC), three hybrid stilts, 94 Pacific Golden Plovers and a Siberian Tattler.

We have also had a couple of short beach patrols - the first in Canterbury for many years. A good collection of species was recorded, (which included two adult Salvin's Mollymawks) probably due to recent persistent north-easterlies.

Other recent sightings of interest are a Greenshank at Lake Ellesmere, and an orange-flagged Red Knot (from Victoria) at the Ashley Estuary. Two Cattle Egrets in rather tatty breeding plumage near Waikuku in early February are rather early arrivals.

Richard Holdaway spoke to a meeting about moa in November, along with Clare Washington on her work on Pukeko road kills. A field trip in November went to look for Riflemen, Tomtits and other forest birds but found little. A highlight was Great Crested Grebe nests at Lake Pearson.

(Frances Schmechel)

Southland

The summer's Black-billed Gull banding went well, with 320 colour banded in two colonies. It was an excellent breeding season for them, in contrast to last year when they were repeatedly flooded out. Unfortunately Southland birds are now facing the most severe drought ever recorded here. The drying up of ponds and streams and the hard, arid ground and dry bush will be hard on many species.

A December survey of Yellow-eyed Penguins at Curio Bay, by 16 people watching in two hour shifts, produced only five penguins, and a solitary bird was located at Slope Point. Bird populations on Ulva Island continue to improve in the absence of rats. Caspian Terns in Bluff Harbour and Invercargill Estuary were washed out with little or no breeding success.

We have a second spoonbill colony, this one on Pig Island off the Riverton coast. On 16 December there were 21+ spoonbills in residence and a nest in a *Hebe* with three eggs. Other birds were Spotted Shags nesting under the *Hebes*, nesting Stewart Island Shags and over a thousand nesting Black-backed Gulls. There are also Weka, introduced from Coal Island in Fiordland by a fisherman in the 1930s. Up to 28 spoonbills have been recorded at Omaui Island.

Two juvenile Wandering Albatrosses turned up on successive days, one wearing a data logger from Macquarie Island. Both were released, the latter at Taiaroa Head after a bit of feeding up. The annual Waiiau Bar walk found colonies of Black-backed and Black-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns. The most audible birds in Milford Sound in December were Long-tailed Cuckoos.

We have just had our first two flagged waders, both orange - a godwit at Waikawa Harbour and a knot at Awarua Bay. Two Glossy Ibises were reported near Te Anau in January and a Sanderling at Awarua Bay. Also at Awarua Bay were 141 Turnstones, 25 Pacific Golden Plovers and three Siberian Tattlers.

(Lloyd Esler)

Chatham Islands

This summer has provided some very interesting birdwatching. On Pitt Island in November Sandy King recorded a Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin at North Head. She was told by a local that a similar penguin has come up at this time of the year previously.

During November a trip out on a long-lining boat 25 miles south-west of Waitangi provided a good seabird watching opportunity, with Northern and Southern Royal Albatrosses, Wandering Albatrosses (including a colour-banded bird banded on Adams Island as part of a breeding study), Salvin's, Buller's, White-capped, Black-browed and Chatham Island Mollymawks, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, White-chinned Petrel, Cape Pigeon, Sooty Shearwater, Fairy Prion, and White-faced and Grey-backed Storm Petrels present.

A single Cattle Egret was recorded at Lake Huro during the winter. There have been fairly good numbers of waders on the lagoon this summer, with 1500 Lesser Knots, 1110 Bar-tailed Godwits, 300 Turnstones, 30 Pacific Golden Plovers, 12 Wandering Tattlers and two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

Recently Chatham Island Warblers have been recorded in two small bush patches on the Main Island in areas where I have previously not known them from. One of these (at Te Awatea) is north of the Owenga-Waitangi road, which is the most northern record of this species for some time. The warbler is in good numbers in the south of the Main Island, Pitt and the forested offshore islands.

(Mike Bell)

13 June - Kaipara Harbour census. Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

3-4 July - Far North harbours census. Ph. Richard Parrish.

8 July - evening meeting.

12 August - evening meeting.

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

20 March - NZ Dotterel census. Ph. Mary and Allen McKenzie (09) 423 7016, Gwenda Pulham (09) 480 5535.

6 April - natural history halls at Auckland Museum. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.

10 April - Muriwai Beach patrol. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.

16-18 April - Fairy Tern census. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.

24 April - Dabchick census, South Kaipara Head. Ph. Chris Bindon (09) 836 6163.

4 May - evening meeting, Kohia Teachers' Centre, College of Education. Kiwi chicks. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.

8 May - Muriwai Beach patrol. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.

1 June - evening meeting, wader food at Miranda. Ph. Gwenda Pulham

12 June - Kaipara Harbour census. Ph. Adrian Riegen (09) 814 9741.

13 June - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Connie Schischka (09) 827 3728.

19 June - Mangawhai census. Ph. Gwenda Pulham.



South Auckland

20-21 March - NZ Dotterel census. Ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284.

13 April - evening meeting, Papakura Croquet Clubrooms, Chapel Street. South African birds. Ph. David Lawrie (09) 238 8407.

11 May - evening meeting, southern and east African birds.

8 June - evening meeting, captive rearing at Auckland Zoo.

13 June - Manukau Harbour census. Ph. Tony Habraken.

20 June - Firth of Thames census. Ph.

Tony Habraken.

13 July - evening meeting, beach wreck identification.

Monthly beach patrols, Kariotahi and Sunset Beaches. Ph. Rob Wheeler (09) 299 7069.



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 March - evening meeting, AGM.

April - May - banding of adult Grey-faced Petrels.

10 April - Lake Waahi census.

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

24 April - Mt Kakepuku field trip.

11 May - field trip to Auckland Museum.

19 May - evening meeting, duck identification and game bird management.

16 June - evening meeting, Blue Ducks.

3 July - west coast harbours winter census.

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) 843 6729. Dates are 11 April, 9 May, 13 June, 11 July.

Bay of Plenty

21 March - Blue Ducks, Weka, Opotiki area. Ph. John Brierley (07) 323 7458.

20 June - winter wader census, Kaituna Cut area. Ph. Paddy Latham (07) 542 0406. Ohiwa Harbour area. Ph. Malcolm Hutton.



Volcanic Plateau

1 March - evening meeting Taupo. Ph. Kerry Oates (06) 385 9505.

14 June - evening meeting Rotorua.

6 September - evening meeting Turangi.

6 December - evening meeting Rotorua.

Hawkes Bay

18 April - Bellbird Bush. Ph. Christine McRae (06) 879 9139.

16 May - Lake Tutira. Ph. Christine McRae.

What's On



Northland

8 April - evening meeting, David Crockett Room, Education Centre, Alexander Street. Ph. Lorna Simpkin (09) 437 2076.

13 May - evening meeting.

12 June - Whangarei Harbour census. Ph. Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988.

Taranaki

6 April, 4 May, 1 June, 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 5 October, 2 November, 7 December - evening meetings, Taranaki Museum, Arioki Street, New Plymouth. Ph. David Medway (06) 758 0370.

Wanganui

23 March - evening meeting, Broome Bird Observatory. Ph Tom Teasdale (06) 343 9992.

4 April - passerine mist netting and banding.

25 April - field trip to Whangaehu Rivermouth.

27 April - evening meeting, South African birds.



Manawatu

19 May - evening meeting, Robins and 1080 poisoning operations. Ph. Brian Tyler (06) 368 1489.

Wairarapa

21 March - field trip to Ocean Beach. Ph. Colin Scadden (06) 378 6423.

14 April - evening meeting, Red Cross Rooms Masterton. Ph. Miles King (06) 377 5252.

24 April - field trip to Mt Holdsworth. Ph. Betty Watt (06) 378 6259.

Wellington

Beach patrols - Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Harbour survey, 2nd Sunday of the month, 1-3 pm. Ph. Ros Batcheler (04) 479 4095 or Reg Cotter (04) 568 6960.

Canterbury

21 March - Farewell to the waders, Lake Ellesmere. Ph. Ron Nilsson (03) 338 8936.

29 March - evening meeting, Middleton Grange School. Local AGM and Israeli birds. Ph. Ron Nilsson.

24 April - field trip to Arthurs Pass and environs. Ph. Ron Nilsson.

26 April - evening meeting. Broad-billed Prions and Chatham Petrels.

Otago

27 March - Fernbirds on Mt Cargill. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041, Lesley Gowans (03) 481 1177.

10 April - Waders at Aramoana. Ph. Louise Foord.

28 April - evening meeting, Otago Art Society building. The last penguin. Ph. Louise Foord.

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

24 June - Science Festival Meeting, details TBA. Ph. Louise Foord.

25 August - evening meeting, birds in the DoC Otago region.

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