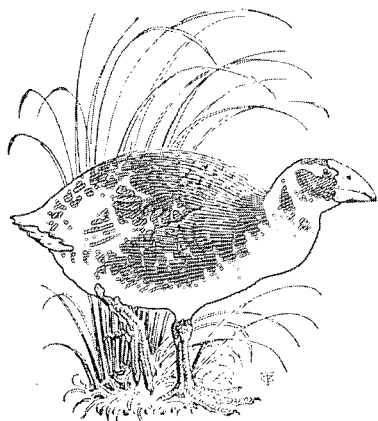


# Southern Bird

No. 2 June 2000 • ISSN 1175-1916







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## Quotation

Christopher Isherwood - novelist  
*'THE COMMON CORMORANT'*  
c1925

*The common cormorant (or shag)  
Lays eggs inside a paper bag,  
You follow the idea, no doubt?  
It's to keep the lightning out.*

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## Cover Photos

**Front Cover**  
New Zealand Kingfisher alighting at its nesting hole. Among the remarkable, classic photographs of New Zealand birds by Geoff Moon are a memorable series of kingfishers. This stunning action shot was part of the Napier AGM and conference photographic competition.

PHOTO - Murray Jeffries.

**Back Cover**  
Another outstanding photograph from the Napier competition was this contemplative study of Pied Stilts in repose as they wait for the tide to fall.

PHOTO - Barry Hartley.

## Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand. Email [osnz1@ibm.net](mailto:osnz1@ibm.net).

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We welcome advertising enquiries.

## EDITORIAL

The AGM and conference held over Queen's Birthday weekend in Napier was another great success. The Masonic Hotel provided a comfortable venue for the hundred or so members who attended, and sincere thanks are due to the hard work of Brent Stephenson, Margaret Twytle and their team of Hawke's Bay members.

John McLennan opened the Scientific Day with a simple but stark message - to save our national symbol we need only provide protection for the first 17 weeks of life. However unprotected kiwi populations achieve something like 5% recruitment into adulthood, whereas research shows that we need 20% for a stable population and more than that to realise an increase. With kiwi populations declining at 6% per year, and many daunting prospects facing managers, indifference rather than predation is the biggest threat facing kiwi.

Alistair Robertson continued with a study at Craigieburn Forest, investigating Bellbird pollination of native mistletoes and the future effects of stoat control, using a variety of innovative techniques. Ed Minot discussed recent advances in our knowledge of Kakapo genetic variation using DNA techniques, followed by John Perrott with a fascinating, if a little alarming, account of Stitchbird mortality in the face of the common avian disease aspergillosis. John Ashton rounded out the morning with details of his study of breeding Welcome Swallows in Hawke's Bay.

Chris Robertson took us around the world on the backs of translocated Northern Royal Albatrosses and across the Pacific with Chatham Albatrosses. Extraordinarily detailed data using different techniques provided fascinating information about these incredible journeys, hitherto unobserved. Brent Stephenson recounted a dismal Cape Kidnappers gannet breeding season in the face of a La Nina summer, and Graeme Taylor the trials and tribulations, and hopes for the future, of seabird translocation attempts. Mike Graham gave an upbeat account of population monitoring on Tiritiri Matangi and the day ended with outlines of the activities of the Rare Birds Committee by David Medway and the impressive new OSNZ website ([www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)) by Brent Stephenson, which had gone online a matter of hours beforehand. Abstracts of all papers presented will be published in *Notornis* in due course.

The inclement weather which so often dogs mid winter AGM weekends stayed away for long enough to enable 18 teams of people to get out and atlas a large chunk of Hawke's Bay, visiting areas unfamiliar to most participants. We then converged on Boundary Stream Mainland Island. The healthily regenerating forest and wealth of birds reminded us that, like the sympathetic planning which has turned Napier from an unremarkable provincial town into the Art Deco capital of the world, there is a better alternative to unrestrained growth and development, and, with the will of our people and proper funding, hope for our birds.

The weekend was well sprinkled with time for social activities and excellent food. Above all, however, the AGM and conference proved once again that ornithology in New Zealand is alive and well.

TONY CROCKER



# Little Shag Nest Surveillance

Our previous study of the Little Shag nesting colony at Lindale near Wellington had indicated the timing of the nesting season and nesting success, but still some aspects of the species' breeding biology remained unknown. The particular aspects that we are interested in studying are egg-laying interval, clutch-size, hatching success and fledging success.

Knowing that Little Shags are very likely to abandon their nests if daily nest checks are made to obtain such information, we decided to use remote video surveillance to obtain the data. This technique has been used at the nests of a variety of New Zealand bird species, such as Kokako, Kakapo, Kereru, NZ Robin and Tomtit, to record predation events and the birds' nesting activities.

At the Lindale site, mains electricity is available within 100 metres of the shag colony to power the small camera near a nest, and the video recorder at the power source. Although this means that heavy batteries are not required to power the equipment and all that that entails, daily visits are needed to change the tape. Infra-red lights on the camera, which seemed undetectable to the shags, meant that night-time activities at the nest are visible on the tapes. The equipment was installed and set to record on the 22 August 1999 at a nest where a pair were nest-building.

The pair consisted of a white-throated male and a smudgy female, and so the birds were readily distinguishable from each other. All nest material was collected, one twig at a time, by the male, who presented it to the female at the nest for addition to the structure. The greatest number of twigs per day was incorporated during the egg-laying period, and further material was added during each day of incubation.

The first egg was laid on 25 August, and the two subsequent eggs were laid at two-day intervals, each being laid at about midnight. During the first half of the incubation period, each member of the pair spent two periods incubating during the day, but during the last week this had reduced to three periods in total. Generally, the male was incubating at dusk and the female at dawn, the pair having changed over at night.

Changeovers at the nest occurred such that the eggs were hardly left uncovered for a second, making the detection of hatching difficult. Assuming that the eggs hatched in the order they were laid, we estimate that the first hatched after 28 days incubation, the second after 26.5 days and the third after 25 days. For their first week the chicks were brooded constantly, the sitting parent not even getting up while feeding them.

During their second week there was a gradual reduction in brooding to 80% of time, but by day 18 no brooding occurred nor subsequently. By the time the three chicks were four weeks old the parents visited the nest for only sufficient time to feed the chicks - a matter of seconds! At this age the chicks were quite agile, moving about on branches near the nest, and even leaping from branch to branch when a parent arrived.

This behaviour resulted in the demise of one chick when it leapt from the nest to a branch but was unable to maintain its footing in its rush to be first to the incoming parent. Two days later a second chick also lost its footing when competing with its sibling to be fed on a branch. However, in this case it reappeared at the nest 3.5 hours later, having managed to haul itself with beak and claws up the 2-3 metres of slightly sloping tree trunk. Both chicks were last seen at the nest when 38 days old. How long they continued to be fed at the colony before making their first flights is unknown since they were unbanded.

We plan to continue this video surveillance study at one or two nests next season in order to determine how representative the parent and chick activities were at the first nest. Also, by banding the chicks we hope to determine when they make their first flights and when they desert the colony.

Our special thanks to the Lindale Tourist Complex for unrestricted access to the colony, to Angel Leach for allowing us to use her laundry in which to house the video recorder and to operate it from her power supply, to the Department of Conservation for the loan of some equipment, and to the national body of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ), the Wellington branch of OSNZ and the Balivean Trust for funding to buy the equipment for use during the 2000/01 season.

RALPH POWLESLAND, JEAN LUKE  
& PAUL JANSEN

## J.S. Watson

### Conservation Trust

This trust is administered by Forest and Bird. Applications are invited from individuals or conservation groups for financial assistance for conservation projects over the 2000/01 year. Criteria for assistance are:

- The conservation of plants and animals and natural features of New Zealand.
- The advancement of knowledge in these matters by way of research, literary contribution, essay or articles, or other effort.
- General education of the public to give them an understanding and love of the world in which they live.

A total of \$20,000 is available for distribution. Individual applications should be limited to a maximum of \$4,000. For further details and application forms write to:

**Forest and Bird**  
**PO Box 631**  
**Wellington**

Applications close 30 July 2000.

## New Members

A very warm welcome to the following new members for 2000:

*Dave Ball, Leigh Bull, Marilyn Young, Ann Hindmarsh, G.T. & E.L. Robinson, Carolyn Davies, Sally Burnage, Annette Harvey, Mike Elliott, Hayley Medhan, Shelley Morgan, Jenny Jones, John Hedley, Colleen Warin, Kerry Ann Gean, Jane Hart, Nigel Adams, Phillip de Bruyn.*

**HAZEL HARTY**  
Membership Secretary

## Nominations for Regional Representatives 2001

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 2001) 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 2000. 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 2001 year.

**CHRISTINE REED**  
Secretary



# CSN - a reminder

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

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

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

**Far North:** Laurie Howell, 38 Okahu Road, Kaitia. Ph. (09) 408 2084.  
**Northland:** Pauline Smith, 11/31 Ford Ave, Kamo, Whangarei. Ph. (09) 435 3060.  
**Auckland:** Mel Galbreath, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland. Ph. (09) 480 1958.  
**South Auckland:** Stuart Chambers, Clarks Beach Road, RD4, Pukekohe. Ph (09) 232 0188.  
 Email as\_chambers@xtra.co.nz  
**Waikato:** David Riddell, 122 Woodlands Road, Gordonton, R.D.1 Hamilton.  
 Ph. (07) 824 3043. Email number8@ihug.co.nz  
**Bay of Plenty:** Paddy Latham, 72 Simpson Road, Papamoa. Ph. (07) 542 0406.  
**Gisborne/Wairoa:** Geoff Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa. Ph. (06) 838 8370.  
**Volcanic Plateau:** Patrick Buxton, "Sweetslade", RD 2, Taupo. Ph. (07) 378 1396.  
**Taranaki:** Rosemary Messenger, Upland Road, No2RD, New Plymouth. Ph. (06) 756 7496.  
**Manawatu:** Ian Saville, 23 Duke Street, Feilding. Ph/fax (06) 323 1441.  
**Wanganui:** Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson Street, Aramoho, Wanganui. Ph. (06) 343 9992.  
**Hawkes Bay:** Margaret Twyde, 124 Nelson Crescent, Napier. Ph. (06) 835 6563.  
**Wairarapa:** Colin Scadden, 15 Madden Place, Masterton. Ph. (06) 378 6423.  
**Wellington:** Reg Cotter, 1 Bolton Street, Petone. Ph. (04) 568 6960. Fax (04) 568 6956.  
**Nelson:** Gail Quayle, 6 Tressillian Ave, Nelson. Ph. (03) 545 0456.  
**Marlborough:** Bill Cash, 67 Lakings Road, Blenheim. Ph. (03) 578 6594.  
**West Coast:** Bruce Stuart-Menteith, P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki. Ph. (03) 731 1826.  
**Canterbury:** Jill West, 59 Strickland Street, Spreydon, Christchurch. Ph. (03) 337 1151.  
**Otago:** Jim Wilson, P.O. Box 6145, Dunedin. Ph. (03) 476 3235.  
**Southland:** Lloyd Esler, 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill. Ph/fax. (03) 213 0404.

## Banding Liaison Report 1999-2000

**T**he National Banding Scheme has run smoothly during the year. No significant problems have been brought to my notice by members, and there have only been a few enquiries all of which were easily dealt with. Banders seem to be generally happy with the service they are receiving from the Banding Office, for which we thank the staff Rod Cossee and Dawn Tofield.

During the year I received from the manager of the Banding Office ten applications for permits for comment and recommendation. Of these the following nine were granted:

- ❧ Paul Cuming - to colour band Blackbirds on the University of Waikato campus for a student undertaking an MSc study of sexual selection.
- ❧ Sarah Winter - to band Blue Penguins on Tiritiri Matangi Island as part of an MSc study of their responses to the calls of other penguins.
- ❧ Brent Stephenson - to band Black-billed Gulls on Hawke's Bay as part of a cooperative study of their general biology and seasonal movements.
- ❧ Kevin Evans - to band Brown Teal reared in captivity as part of the captive breeding and release programme.
- ❧ Kerry Oates - to band Banded Dotterels in the central North Island in a study of their breeding biology and seasonal movements.
- ❧ Kerry Oates - to band Blue Ducks in the central North Island as part of ongoing monitoring of their productivity, numbers and movements (initiated by the Department of Conservation).
- ❧ Graeme Loh - to band Fairy Prions near Dunedin in combined studies of their breeding biology and the value of nest boxes as a conservation measure.
- ❧ Lindsay Rowe - to band White-fronted Terns on Kaikoura Peninsula in a study of breeding biology and dynamics, and to set baselines for measuring future changes.
- ❧ John Ralph - to band passerines on Moturoa Island, Northland, to test the constant effort mist netting method of assessing population size and productivity.

New individual permits were issued to Kevin Evans, Kerry Oates for Blue Ducks, Graeme Loh and John Ralph, while the other programmes were added to individual or institutional permits. The remaining application was declined because the project was considered impractical in its original form, but it could be resubmitted.

The Banding Committee did not meet during the year.

CHRIS CHALLIES  
Banding Liaison Officer



## Moa Killed Off In 50 Years

**R**esearch by two Christchurch scientists who say the moa was probably eliminated in 50 years has stripped hundreds of years from the orthodox view of the moa hunter period, and was described recently as an extinction "blitzkrieg".

The extinction theory of fossil researcher Richard Holdaway and Canterbury Museum's curator of archaeology, Chris Jacomb, is expected to affect interpretation of early Maori colonisation.

Most scientists have believed moa were hunted for up to 600 years. The Holdaway and Jacomb theory says hunting continued for just 10 years in some places and a maximum of 100 years overall. Along with other recent research that suggests settlers arrived in New Zealand 700 to 800 years ago - not 1000 to 1200 years ago - the findings could prompt a scramble to rewrite history books.

*"fastest ever extinction of big animals"*

The prestigious United States journal *Science* describes the extinction as a "blitzkrieg". "Anyone who has hiked over New Zealand's incredibly rugged terrain is staggered by the suggestion that a few Maoris could have quickly found, and killed every single individual of those dozen moa species ...with a population estimated at 160,000 birds."

Dr Holdaway and Mr Jacomb say elimination of moas by Polynesians using only clubs, snares and fire, is the fastest ever recorded extinction of big animals. They say moa were gone from most of the North Island in 10 to 20 years. Their paper holds ramifications for the prevailing view of how and when New Zealand was colonised.

*Science* writer Jared Diamond says one conclusion to be drawn from the paper is that people who say there was an unrecorded settlement of New Zealand before the 13th century AD are wrong. "What we see is everything that was there then; there wasn't an earlier, archaeologically invisible human population."

*Science* says the New Zealand scientific paper shows that people who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. "Then, there were no more moa; soon, there will be no more Chilean sea bass, Atlantic swordfish and tuna".

I wonder what the Maori who killed the last moa said: 'Your ecological models are untested so conservation measures would be premature'? No, he probably just said: 'Jobs, not birds,' as he delivered the fatal blow."

PHILIP KITCHIN  
Courtesy of *The Dominion*

# What's next for the NZ List?

David Medway's Rare Birds Report for 1992-99, published in the March 2000 *Notornis*, includes details of nine species which are new to New Zealand (though three await acceptance). I have long been one for trying to predict what might be found - probably as some sort of futile attempt to influence the birds into appearing?! - but it is not an uncommon trait and I think that most of us have whiled away the odd dull moment by idly conjuring up fantastic rarities from far away places.

What follows takes the idle speculation one (fairly small) step forward. I have asked a few other birders to help me out and have produced a combined "best guess" at the next most likely additions to the New Zealand avifauna. The idea is by no means original, and has indeed been preceded by publication of British, American and Australian lists in similar fashion.

The six contributors are all active birders of reasonable experience, all have found New Zealand rarities, and four of them have been involved in the finding and identification of previous first records. Each of the six have produced a list of their top ten choices which I have collated and ranked, with ten points for the first choice down to one point for the tenth.

There was therefore potential for 60 different species, and also a potential maximum score for any one species of 60 points. The results are hardly scientific, and anyway are only meant as a bit of fun and food for thought - but when you stumble across one of the top ten in future, just remember where the bird got its inspiration from!!

On first scanning the six lists, two things were immediately apparent; firstly, the possibilities are more or less endless, and secondly, we were all pretty convinced that one particular species is very much overdue to arrive. The lists produced a total of 33 potential "firsts", ranging from seabirds and waders to Australian land birds. Long distance migrants were popular, as one would expect, but there was room as well for birds which are relatively sedentary but common on the far side of the Tasman. Here, then, with brief explanations of logic (?) are the 13 species which scored double figures.

12<sup>th</sup> place = **Banded Stilt** *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus* (2 votes - 10 points). Breeds inland in south (and west) Australia. Vagrants to coastal Queensland, NSW and Tasmania. Often in association with Red-necked Avocet, so if that can occur....

12<sup>th</sup> place = **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* (1 vote - 10 points). Rather a northern distribution in eastern Australia, but a real sea tern and so a player in similar fashion to Sooty or Bridled, or even Black-naped (*S. sumatrana*) - perhaps we should have included that?

9<sup>th</sup> place = **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* (2 votes - 12 points). Breeding and wintering distribution comparable with most of the North American waders which have occurred (closest in fact to Stilt Sandpiper), but also has a proven track record of vagrancy to all sorts of places including most of Europe, Pacific Islands, Sri Lanka (!) and several Australian records in the south and east.

9<sup>th</sup> place = **Banded Lapwing** *Vanellus tricolor* (2 votes - 12 points). A similar bird to Spur-winged Plover, widely but patchily distributed in south-east Australia, and more often in drier areas. Nomadic rather than migratory, but a notably strong flier.

9<sup>th</sup> place = **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* (2 votes - 12 points). The fact that Ospreys do not occur in New Zealand is, in itself, remarkable. They are distributed around most of the Australian coast (and most of the rest of the world!) and are capable of long distance migration, including quite reasonable sea crossings. Top choice of one contributor.

8<sup>th</sup> place = **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* (2 votes - 13 points). Long distance migration to northern parts of Australia

with a tendency to overshoot to the south. If one did turn up, it is the sort of bird that would likely be noted - open country, distinctive plumage, nothing like it in New Zealand. (Both contributors that voted for this species noted that White Wagtail (*M. alba*) was also a possibility).

7<sup>th</sup> place = **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* (2 votes - 15 points). Crested Tern (about 10 NZ records) is similar in size and build, and habits, though with a distribution that ranges much further south. Given the propensity for terns of just about every species to wander the globe, this one must have an even chance sometime in the future. Look carefully at any Caspians that seem small!

6<sup>th</sup> place = **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* (3 votes - 15 points). A long distance migrant with many Australian records. Garganey, Northern Shoveller, Northern Pintail - 2 down, 1 to go? The main point against Garganey is that they are rather secretive as far as ducks go, and so might just go unnoticed.

5<sup>th</sup> place = **Pacific Gull** *Larus pacificus* (4 votes - 19 points). Endemic to southern Australia, including Tasmania. Juveniles, particularly, are dispersive, and a strong flying gull should have no trouble making it across the Tasman. I guess that few people critically examine flocks of Black-backed Gulls, where one of these could so easily lurk. The two North American gulls - Franklin's and Laughing (*L. pipixican, atricilla*) - both of which have occurred in Australia, also received votes.

4<sup>th</sup> place = **Brush Cuckoo** *Cuculus variolosus* (3 votes - 23 points). This species has a very similar distribution and migration pattern to Fan-tailed Cuckoo, which has occurred here several times. In south-east Australia (except, perhaps critically, Tasmania) Brush Cuckoo

appears to be more common than Fan-tailed, and so should be a good bet. One hopes that each of our Fan-tailed records adequately discounts this species.

3<sup>rd</sup> place = **Straw-necked Ibis** *Threskiornis spinicollis* (3 votes - 24 points). Since this species shares an almost identical distribution to White Ibis, and seems to be really quite common in south-east Australia, it is most surprising that one has not been seen here yet. First choice of one contributor.

2<sup>nd</sup> place = **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas* (4 votes - 27 points). On the face of it, this is much more likely than Pink-footed Shearwater (and so goes to prove that nothing is ever certain when dealing with rarities!!). It is seemingly fairly regular on the Australian side of the Tasman, and given the increasing interest in pelagic birding trips here it really can't be long.

1<sup>st</sup> place = **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* (6 votes - 53 points). The out and out winner, chosen as top pick by three of the contributors, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> by the others. Wood Sands have a breeding and wintering distribution which is barely different to Terek and Marsh Sandpiper, or to Greenshank - all of which occur here on a regular basis. It is widespread each summer in Australia, including the south-east, and it is a flashy, easy to recognise bird with a far-carrying, distinctive call. Any wetland or estuarine marsh could hold one - my choice (of course) is for the Manawatu Estuary in October 2000!!

I hope that you will forgive any over-generalisations in the text, turn a blind eye to the lack of science involved and just get out there and find these birds so that we might all enjoy them. Good luck.

IAN (SAV) SAVILLE





# Tall Trees Tour, January 2000

On the evening of the 9 January 11 Wellingtonians and a Taranaki-ite met in the centre of the North Island at Pureora for five days of intensive birding together with a bit of botanising and some socialising. Most of the Wellingtonians stopped on the way to Pureora at the Manawatu estuary for a quick look at the waders. The Japanese Snipe and the New Zealand Dotterel which were seen the previous day were hiding. Their absence was made up for with a sighting of a White-winged Black Tern among the more common waders.

Pureora was a new experience for the majority of the party. The major exception



*It takes all kinds - checking out Welcome Swallow faces!*

was our tour leader Ralph Powlesland, who recently has spent much time in both Pureora and Whirinaki carrying out studies for the Department of Conservation.

At Pureora we visited some of Ralph's study sites where the effects of predator control on bird life are being investigated. The first impression of Pureora is the magnificence of the podocarp forest with groves of ancient rimu, miro and kahikatea. A lasting memory was the carpets of thousands of two centimetre high kahikatea seedlings, evidence of a good fruiting year the previous summer, and low numbers of rodents.

In those areas where there has been extensive predator control, the abundance of bird life is startling, with good numbers of NZ Robins, Tomtits, Whiteheads, Kaka and Yellow-crowned Parakeets. In contrast, the bird life in areas where predators were not controlled was much sparser, with some species such as robins either absent or present in only low numbers.

Our first early rise to find Kokako was rewarded with some short phrases of song. However, the following morning, Sundance was in full mournful song and was close enough for all to see. Sundance is a redundant male (unlikely to obtain a mate), a term that some members of the party found amusing. A few members of the party experienced the dawn chorus from the top of the observation platform at Pureora. There is something very special about hearing the full dawn chorus of Bellbirds and Tui from the middle of the bush canopy. Everybody enjoyed the close approach of banded robins and tomtits keen for a few mealworms. In one case this led to the finding of a low tomtit nest containing chicks almost ready to leave the nest.

The species seen or heard at Pureora were White-faced Heron, Paradise Shelduck, duck sp., Australasian Harrier, Californian Quail, Ring-necked Pheasant,

Pied Stilt, Spur-winged Plover, Kereru, Kaka, Eastern Rosella, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Shining Cuckoo, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Morepork, NZ Kingfisher, Rifleman, Welcome Swallow, Hedge Sparrow, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Fernbird, Whitehead, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Tomtit, NZ Robin, Silvereye, Bellbird, Tui, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow, Starling, Kokako and Australian Magpie.

After three days at Pureora the party moved to Whirinaki - more wonderful podocarp forests and a chance to complete a few more squares of the mapping scheme. The range of bird species in Whirinaki was similar to that of Pureora, but Whirinaki had its own special attractions, including good views of long-tailed bats at the Whirinaki camp site. Our final walk was up the Whirinaki River and we were fortunate to see a family of Blue Ducks.

The species seen or heard at Whirinaki were Black Shag, White-faced Heron, Blue Duck, duck sp., Australasian Harrier, Californian Quail, Pukeko, Spur-winged

Plover, Kereru, Kaka, Eastern Rosella, parakeet sp., Shining Cuckoo, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Morepork, NZ Kingfisher, Rifleman, Welcome Swallow, NZ Pipit, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Whitehead, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Tomtit, NZ Robin, Silvereye, Bellbird, Tui, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow, Starling, Myna and Australian Magpie.

The party unanimously agreed that this was a very successful trip, made all the more enjoyable by a knowledgeable and patient leader, coupled with a whole week of fine weather. One of the major benefits of the trip was the opportunity to improve one's birding skills. The subtle variations of the songs of bush birds are now less of a mystery. Furthermore, we greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn from Ralph about the effects of predator control and aerial possum control on birds. Many of the party will return to both Pureora and Whirinaki now that we know some very special birding spots.

GEOFF de LISLE

## SIPOs Colonising Australia?

Since the first sighting of a South Island Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus finschi* in November 1998 at South Ballina, New South Wales, another four have arrived, amazingly all at the same stretch of beach, where they have joined flocks of Pied Oystercatchers *H. longirostris*. With an additional observation in Moreton Bay, Queensland, the question must be asked: are they simply stragglers or is a range extension under way?

It is well known that SIPO has extended its range in New Zealand and that, more likely than not, most records of "pied" oystercatchers from Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands are of this species. Whether some birds have returned to New Zealand is of course not known. Some remained at the South Ballina site a long time and through migration periods; others have left, possibly to disperse along the east Australian coast. There is a possibility that the Moreton Bay bird is a double count, as there is a continuous interchange of Pied Oystercatchers between there and South Ballina, verified by banding.



*SIPO with OZPOs, South Ballina*

PHOTOS: Mike Carter

It is interesting that the SIPOs have included sub-adults as well as near-mature or mature individuals. It seems likely that this is another case of young waders being the ones most likely to turn up outside their

normal range. Although the mature birds have been difficult to age, the sub-adults were clearly identified as such by dark-tipped bills, leg and orbital ring colour. When the second bird was first observed (by Tony Palliser and friends in early 1999), it caused an embarrassing confusion for the writer. It was thought to be the same bird as the first, which was adult, but it had an obviously immature bill. This paradox of a bird getting younger was not resolved until September, when the two were observed together.



The other three birds were first observed between September 1999 and late January 2000. The new arrivals are still to be reported to BARC (Birds Australia Rareities Committee). At present (March 2000) there is only one SIPO at South Ballina Beach - a sub-adult late arrival. Consequently there is a possibility that up to five birds are at large on the east coast. All wader watchers, especially in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, are advised to keep a very sharp look out for a SIPO hidden in a flock of Pied Oystercatchers. Once spotted they are unmistakable, both on the ground, with their very short legs and long, thin bills, and in flight, with their broad white wing bars extending to the trailing edge.

BO TOTTERMAN



# Rare Birds Committee

The following is an outline of the presentation by David Medway to the Scientific Day gathering in Napier on 4 June.

To see a rare or unusual bird is always a thrill for birdwatchers, no matter how experienced they may be. Many of us hope that will happen to us every time we go out in the field, but most of us are only occasionally rewarded with such a bird. To have one's sighting of a rare or unusual bird accepted, and the record published, is an additional pleasure.

The Society's Rare Birds Committee has been in existence for about 25 years – the first published report was for 1974-75. The Committee then consisted of four members. In that year it received only six submissions for consideration. Published annual reports of the Committee for the next few years show that only a few sightings were considered by the Committee in each of those years.

The Committee currently consists of eight members appointed by Council for a three-year term – a Convenor and seven others all of whom have voting rights. Members presently are myself as Convenor, and Brian Bell, Brian Gill, Mike Imber, Colin Miskelly, Chris Robertson, Paul Sagar and Peter Schweigman.

The function of the Committee is to consider reports of rare or unusual birds seen in New Zealand. The Committee is the sole authority within the Society for the recognition of such records. Those species requiring consideration include any that are not in the current *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* (1990), as well as a number of those included in the *Checklist* which are still considered to be rare or unusual in this country.

The last list of birds to be reported to the Committee was that published in *OSNZ news* No. 63 in June 1992. The list is currently under review and a revised list will be published in *Southern Bird* in due course.

The Committee remains prepared to consider reports of any birds that are unusual to the observer, but sightings of those not on the reviewed list should be checked first with Regional Representatives or Regional Recorders

who may very well be able to identify them without the need to refer them to the Committee for its consideration.

Records of species new to New Zealand will not be included in the *Checklist* until they have been accepted by the Committee. Neither should they, or records of any other species included in the reviewed list, be accepted for publication in *Notornis*, including in Classified Summarised Notes, until they have been accepted by the Committee. One of the problems arising from inclusion before acceptance is that such records are often quoted in other ornithological literature, and thereby even incorrect records can find their way into that literature at which point it would probably be very difficult, if not impossible, to correct them. Therefore, the editors of the Society's publications, and Regional Representatives and Regional Recorders and the compilers of Classified Summarised Notes, must be very careful to ensure that no such records find their way into the formal literature of the Society until they have been confirmed by the Committee.

An Unusual Bird Report form, which may undergo some revision, is to be used wherever possible in the interests of uniformity when reporting sightings to the Committee for its consideration. These forms can be obtained from Regional Representatives or Regional Recorders or myself. They provide for such details as the observer's name, and the names of any other observers, the date, place, habitat, duration of observation, aids used, description of bird, including its plumage, behaviour, etc. Details should be those obtained while the bird was under observation and should be as complete as possible. Even seemingly unimportant details can turn out to be most useful. A sketch of the bird showing its principal features can usefully be included. This need not be a work of art. Good photos and/or video are invaluable in enabling the true identity of a bird to be determined with certainty.

Reports received by the Convenor fall into various categories. In cases where

there is no doubt about the identity of the bird involved, and this can be the case even with some rarely sighted birds, the Convenor can confirm the record on behalf of the Committee without needing to circulate the report among members for their consideration. In all other cases, a copy of the report and any accompanying documentation is circulated among members, and they are given a period of time within which to get their comments back to the Convenor. In the case of first New Zealand records, Committee members need to be unanimous before such records can be accepted. With other than first New Zealand records, generally the requirement is that two-thirds of members must agree on identity before acceptance. In cases of difficulty, expert opinion can be sought from within or outside New Zealand.

It is intended to publish six-monthly reports in *Southern Bird* showing the status of records then before the Committee for consideration. In addition, a report will be published annually in *Notornis* describing the more significant records accepted by the Committee during the previous year. This will not, of course, prevent the observers of those birds from separately publishing their own accounts after their records have been accepted by the Committee.

Thirty reports have so far been received by the Committee for 2000. This is considerably more than is normal for this time of year. Whether this is a reflection of knowledge that the Committee is up and running again, or whether it is because more rare or unusual birds have been seen recently by members, or both, is not known. However, processing of records is now up to date. Therefore, do not hesitate to complete and send in reports requiring consideration by the Committee, preferably through your Regional Representative or Regional Recorder who will vet them first and add his or her comments.

DAVID MEDWAY  
Convenor, Rare Birds Committee  
25A Norman Street  
New Plymouth.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> National Twitchathon

The second national twitchathon will take place in October. Once again teams have the whole month available to pick any given 24-hour period for their attempt to see the highest number of bird species. This year the regions around Auckland have chosen the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> to compete in conjunction with the Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

A collated list will again be sent to the multinational telecommunications company, NTT, in Japan, who will donate money for each species of bird reported worldwide in October. The money largely goes towards bird conservation in third world countries. So even if you don't manage to gather a large number of species, your contribution will be worthwhile.

The winner will get to hold the *Porphyrio mantelli* Mantelpiece Monstrosity for a year. Brian Tyler has also offered an additional trophy for the most unusual species (judge's decision is final,

and no correspondence will be entered into, etc.).

This is a good chance to get out in some beautiful spring weather (well, better than last year anyway), and enjoy the mad rush of seeing the largest number of species possible in a day, honing your identification skills as you go. Entry forms and copies of the rules for this very lighthearted competition are available from your RR.

NICK ALLEN



## Donations to the Society

Donations continue to allow us to maintain funding for different projects, such as the Atlas scheme. We are very grateful to the following people for their donations - large or small they are very much appreciated and go to the particular fund requested.

L.S. Rickard, Peter Grant, Ian Sutherland, Mr & Mrs D.M. Stracey, C.J. Foreman, M.M. Simpson, Rosemary Messenger, David Pye, J. Alexander, Lady Margaret Fleming, Jack Davidson, Wayne Knowles, Michael Hermansson, B.H. Allom, William Campbell, Margaret Bishop, W.A. Waters, Elise Smith, Enfys Graham, Danny Boulton, Geoff de Lisle, Mrs J.M. Soper, Martin Snowball, Dr Michael Fitzgerald, Audrey Eagle, Timothy Short, M.A. Waller, Barry Friend, Kevin Taylor, W.A. Cook, Mrs D.I. Alloo, David & Louise Booth, Peter Howden, Shinichi Nakagawa, Kerry & Jane Walshe, Denis Gibbs, M.F. Malalieu, C. John Ralph, Carolyn Davies, Judy Bendall, G.L. Don Bioresearches, Barry Hartley, Dr K.D.B. Thomson, Mary Craven, M.I. Taylor, E.J. Kirk, Anthea Goodwin, Barbara Walter, D. McKerchar, Ian Southey, Mrs G. Norman, P. Crutchley, Wendy Goad, Brent Stephenson, Stewart Lauder, Nikki McArthur, Mike & Sharon Graham, G.W. Wells, George Brown, Alec Milne, Colin Miskelly. Overseas: Spencer Unthank, L. Allan Keat, Dr Phil Moors.

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary

## Oamaru Penguin Symposium, 2001

The third biennial Oamaru Penguin Symposium will be held on Friday 22 June 2001. The meeting will be centred on the Blue Penguin, as usual. However, papers relating to other species, particularly Yellow-eyed, will be welcomed for consideration.

A register of expressions of interest following the 1999 meeting has already been generated but reinforcement and any indication of a wish to present work will be welcomed at this stage. In the event of the prospect of sufficient material, the concept of an extra half day could be entertained. In order that such decisions can be reached in good time, it is important that would-be contributors indicate preliminary intention and subject for the end of September 2000.

### Topics under consideration include

- Predation
- Habitat modification
- Taxonomy
- Tourism interaction
- Management strategies
- Biology & pathology

These subjects are flexible; papers outside such headings will be welcomed as presentations, either on their own or to generate a theme if the matter is sufficiently subscribed.

### For further information contact:

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## Rare Birds Committee – 6 monthly report

The following sightings included in the report which appeared in *Notornis* 47: 64-70 have been accepted by the Committee since the report was prepared:

- UBR 98/09 - Three **Intermediate Egrets** at Lake Ellesmere on 13/8/98 (Colin Hill).
- UBR 98/11 - Freshly dead **Common Koel** found in Lees Valley, Canterbury in March 1997 (Geoff Tunnicliffe).
- UBR 98/13 - **Long-toed Stint** at Lake Ellesmere on 31/8 and 25/9/97 (Sheila Petch, Colin Hill, Nick Allen).
- UBR 98/14 - **Stilt Sandpiper** at Lake Ellesmere on 9,10 & 11/9/98 (Colin Hill).
- UBR 28/99 - **Mongolian Dotterel** of *atrifrons* group at Tapora Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour on 4/4/99 (Richard Parrish).

Four of these (98/11, 98/13, 98/14, 28/99) involve apparent first New Zealand records. They will be fully written up for publication in *Notornis* in due course.

The following twenty-three reports have so far been received by the Committee during 2000. Their current status is indicated. Some of the sightings reported are mentioned in *Southern Bird* No.1 (March 2000).

- UBR 1/00 - Report from Rosemary Tully of an **unidentified 'large bird of prey'** seen above Otarawairere in the Bay of Plenty on 31 October 1999. It is not possible to determine the specific identity of the bird sighted. The report has been filed for possible future reference.
- UBR 2/00 - Report from Peter and Julie Fryer of a colour banded **Shore Plover** first seen at Waiongana Estuary near New Plymouth on 28 December 1999. It was not seen there after 31 December 1999, but the same bird was seen at Manawatu Estuary on 3 January 2000 (see UBR 7/00).
- UBR 3/00 - Report under consideration from Richard Parrish of a suspected **Common Tern** seen at Walker Island, Rangaunu Harbour on 14 November 1999.
- UBR 4/00 - Report from Ian Saville of a suspected **Chestnut Teal** seen at Manawatu Estuary on various dates between 9 March and 9 June 1999. This sighting has been accepted as being of a **Chestnut Teal**.
- UBR 5/00 - Report from Ian Saville of a colour banded **Fairy Tern** (of which the combinations were obtained) seen at Manawatu Estuary on 19 December 1999.
- UBR 6/00 - Report under consideration from Ian Saville of a suspected **Japanese Snipe** seen at Manawatu Estuary between 12 December 1999 and 9 January 2000.
- UBR 7/00 - Report from Ian Saville of a colour banded **Shore Plover** seen at Manawatu Estuary on 3 January 2000 (see UBR 2/00).
- UBR 8/00 - Report from Ian Saville of a suspected **White-winged Black Tern** seen at Manawatu Estuary on 9 January 2000. This sighting has been accepted as being a **White-winged Black Tern**.
- UBR 9/00 - Report under consideration from Ian Saville of a suspected **Common Tern** seen at Manawatu Estuary on 21 January 2000.
- UBR 10/00 - Report under consideration from Geoff Tunnicliffe of a suspected **Fantailed Cuckoo** seen by Hamish Ormand on his parents' farm near Culverden, North Canterbury on 13 December 1999.
- UBR 11/00 - Report from Bev and Bryan Woolley of a suspected **Spine-tailed Swift** seen at Hamilton on 23 December 1999. This sighting has been accepted as being of a **Spine-tailed Swift**.
- UBR 12/00 - Report under consideration of a suspected **Large Sand Dotterel** seen by Pam and Roger Slack at Manawatu Estuary on 24 December 1999.
- UBR 13/00 - Report under consideration from Helen Gummer of a suspected **Willie Wagtail** seen by herself and others at Mangere Island in the Chatham group on 27 October 1999. The Committee has accepted this significant sighting as being of a **Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*. It appears to be the first New Zealand record of the species, and will be fully written up for publication in *Notornis* in due course.
- UBR 14/00 - Report under consideration from Colin Hill of a suspected **Hudsonian Godwit** seen in the Embankment Road area, Lake Ellesmere between 3 and 11 October 1999.
- UBR 15/00 - Reports under consideration from Colin Hill, Sheila Petch and Kathleen Harrison of a suspected **Ruff** seen in the Embankment Road area, Lake Ellesmere between 1 December 1999 and 31 January 2000.
- UBR 16/00 - Report under consideration from Colin Hill of a suspected **Little Curlew** seen at Embankment Road, Lake Ellesmere on 30 January 2000.
- UBR 17/00 - Report under consideration from Keith and Maeve Harrison of a suspected **Black Falcon** seen at Gillespies Beach, South Westland on 2 January 2000.
- UBR 18/00 - Report from Nick Allen of a suspected **Whimbrel** seen at Saltwater Creek, Ashley Estuary on 19 February 2000. This sighting has been accepted as being of a **Whimbrel** of indeterminate race.
- UBR 19/00 - Report under consideration from Nick Allen of an **'atypical White-fronted Tern'** seen at Waipara and Ashley River mouths on 5 and 31 March 2000.
- UBR 20/00 - Report under consideration of a suspected **Kermadec Petrel** seen by Lysle Brinker of U.S.A. off Kaikoura on 25 January 1999 (This obviously relates to the same bird reported by Gary Melville - see UBR 16/99).
- UBR 21/00 - Report under consideration from Dave Bell of suspected **Brown Noddy** seen at Waimarama Beach on 12 April 2000.
- UBR 22/00 - Report under consideration from Willie Cook of suspected **Common Sandpiper** seen at Farewell Spit on 6 February 1992.
- UBR 23/00 - Report under consideration from Danny Boulton of French Pass Motels and Sea Safaris of **'White-capped Noddy'** seen at Stephens Passage on 2 February 2000.

DAVID MEDWAY

Convenor, Rare Birds Committee





## Obituaries

### Gerry Clark

tribute to an ornithologist and yachtsman

A celebration of the life and work of Gerry Clark was held on Sunday 22 August 1999. The Kerikeri High School auditorium was packed with 500 people - family, friends and supporters. OSNZ members from Wellington, Auckland, Northland and the Far North attended, along with President Chris Robertson. Gerry and crewman Roger Sale were lost at sea in mid June 1999 near the Antipodes Islands, after having dropped off two ornithological researchers.

A member of OSNZ in the Far North, Gerry was a highly respected ornithologist and yachtsman, well known both nationally and internationally. Born in Colchester, north east of London, in 1927, he was the youngest of four sons who received their regular secondary education on HMS *Worcester*, a battleship at permanent anchor in the Thames Estuary. Gerry spent his spare time in the fields, marshes and tidal reaches of the Thames observing birds.

At the age of 17 he followed his brothers to sea. When the British returned to Singapore at the end of the war in the Pacific he joined the Strait Steamship Company as a junior officer. He met his wife to be Marjorie while in Southampton studying for his masters' ticket. They married and settled in Singapore, raising a family of four girls.

In 1957 Gerry and Marjorie bought Homelands Orchard in Kerikeri, developing it and, in 1965, adopting organic farming practices complementing their lifelong conservation ethic. With ships and the sea still in his blood, Gerry soon became interested in building a small yacht so that he could teach his daughters to sail.

At evening classes he learnt the skills required to build the seven metre engineless ocean going yacht *Ketiga*. In the summer of 1972/73 he set out on an astonishing trip around the New Zealand subantarctic islands. Sailing alone across the Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties, he came into close contact with the magnificent birdlife of the Southern Ocean. On his return he announced his intention to build a boat and circumnavigate the world, including most of the subantarctic island groups.

*Totorore*, a ten metre yacht, was constructed by Gerry at Homelands over a seven year period. His three year exploration, searching for new information about seabirds, is excitingly documented in his book *The Totorore Voyage*, originally published in 1988. Three years and eight months, covering 38,413 nautical miles, are meticulously recorded in his remarkable log.

In 1987 Gerry sailed *Totorore* to the Chathams to participate in a radio tracking effort which was successful in locating the breeding colony of the enigmatic Chatham Island Taiko. *Totorore* was equipped with portable telemetry aerials and a receiver prior to operating in seas south of the Chathams, and Gerry

provided logistical support to tracking stations on Mangere and Houruakopara Islands. During telemetric monitoring forays he recorded new observations of oceanic birds, a highlight being the location of a new breeding colony of the northern race of Cape Pigeon at the Forty Fours.

Over the next ten years Gerry visited the New Zealand subantarctic on 16 occasions. He identified as a role for *Totorore* the provision of logistical support for volunteer and student researchers with limited budgets studying little known species of seabirds. He thus provided opportunities for many conservation-minded individuals to make a contribution to projects which were not a priority for government funding, obtaining grants or contracts, sponsorship and other monetary contributions. The nature of the seas around these islands usually required Gerry to stay on board *Totorore*, but such was his unselfish nature.

Details of Gerry's observations and research are to be found in 14 papers published in scientific journals and also in reports to funding agencies and the Department of Conservation. His voyages in the treacherous Southern Ocean in his quest for knowledge and support for conservation must rank with those of small ship explorers such as Tilman, Cook and Shackleton.

Ruth and I treasure our memories of Gerry's friendship, his love of family, his ornithological expertise and obvious enthusiasm for the subantarctic. He shared details of a planned future expedition the following winter which aimed to study Grey Petrels on the Antipodes.

These discussions took place before we

assisted Roger Sale and Russell Thomas to re-supply *Totorore* with fuel and fresh water shortly before his fateful expedition. Gerry's resting place is at the antipodes of his birth place in England, where his interest in birds was nurtured.

DAVID CROCKETT

### Katie Reynolds

Katie Reynolds, of Whangarei, member of Northland OSNZ, passed away on Christmas Day 1999. She was 89.

Ornithology was a companion interest to her lifelong study of plants and their ecology. With her late husband Bill, Katie regularly visited outlying islands in their yacht *Valerie*, observing oceanic birds on the continental shelf off the east coast of Northland. During the late 60s and 70s she participated in many of OSNZ's regular schemes, working alongside the late Sandy Edgar.

The conservation of flora and fauna was paramount in her endeavours. Katie was a tremendous advocate for Coppermine Island and played a leading role in defeating proposals to mine the island off the Northland east coast. A gifted communicator, she enjoyed sharing her extensive knowledge of plants and birds with people of all ages and at all stages of learning.

Katie will be fondly remembered by both her family and friends and also by the botanists and ornithologists of Tai Tokerau and beyond.

DAVID CROCKETT

## Review

Clark, Gerry. *The Totorore Voyage*. 2000, Homelands Publications, Kerikeri. 374 pp. (soft and hardcover). ISBN 0-473-06431-6.

For some reason, I'd never read this book, until inspired to do so by an impending visit to southern Chile and the Antarctic Peninsula. What a read! Originally published in 1988, it is the extraordinary (in the true sense of the word) story of a voyage by one man and his succession of crew members around the bottom of the globe and through some of the worst imaginable conditions on earth.

Gerry Clark and crewman Roger Sale were lost in June 1999 while working with yet another group of researchers in the subantarctic islands of New Zealand. The book however documents a three year period in the life of Gerry Clark, the period covering his most remarkable journey.

It is not only about incredible determination in the face of often seemingly insurmountable odds, a consuming passion for exploring beautiful, wild, remote and inhospitable places and the oceans in between, but is permeated by an abiding love for the seabirds which consider these wonderful places their home and an unshakeable thirst for finding out more about them.

*The Totorore Voyage* has been republished, with a foreword by Sir Edmund Hillary, a substantial "biographical note" by Andrew O'Grady, eight pages of new colour plates, many of them taken since the first edition of the book, and an appendix of ornithological publications relating to the voyage.

The book is available from Gerry's son-in-law Steve Edwards, Homelands Publications, 803 West Coast Road, Waitakere City, Auckland for NZ\$26.95 (softcover), NZ\$39.95 (hardcover), plus P&P NZ\$3.50 (New Zealand) or NZ\$7.00 (overseas). Email [steve@totorore.com](mailto:steve@totorore.com), [www.totorore.com](http://www.totorore.com).

TONY CROCKER



# REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Compiled by Helen Howden

## Northland

On 4 March 2000, eleven Northland members and friends participated in the annual Pouto dune lakes survey. The count was a week later than usual because of a Paradise Shelduck cull organised by the New Zealand Fish and Game Council. This species has been increasing and fouling the pastures associated with the freshwater lakes. Populations of NZ Dabchicks, Pied Stilts and NZ Scaup are stable however. A Glossy Ibis was still present on Lake Waingata four years after the first observation by Logan Forrest, a local farmer who is a regular participant in OSNZ surveys.

The National Wader Census on the Whangarei Harbour was on 11 March 2000. 15 members joined in the count. It was a cloudy day with a moderate southeasterly wind which proved quite chilly in some places. There were large numbers of South Island Pied Oystercatchers, Lesser Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits and Pied Stilts. With the exception of White-fronted Terns all numbers were well up on last year's March count. One Fairy Tern was counted at Waipu, and none counted on the north Kaipara harbour survey in November 1999.

As part of the New Zealand Dotterel recovery programme, DoC carries out post breeding counts at a number of sites in Northland. These counts have been carried out for a number of years now with the help of OSNZ members from the Northland region. Most of the sites vary considerably from year to year in numbers, except Mangawhai, which continues to increase every year.

Five members from the Northland branch travelled down to Miranda to join in with others for a workshop on "Beach Specimen Identification" facilitated by Hugh Clifford. As usual one always learns new and useful information from these well organised days. Our members took down some frozen specimens for identification to add to the collection on the day. One bird was verified as a New Caledonian Petrel, quite a rare find, from one of our beach patrols on the Dargaville coast in March 2000. The strange, part-albino petrel found last year was taken to the workshop and identified as a Mottled Petrel.

Beach patrols on the east and west coast beaches have continued monthly with the average number of species being found for the specific time of the year, except for finding 11 Cook's Petrels on the east coast in January 2000, which is higher than usual. It is interesting to compare numbers from 1999 and 1998. Large

numbers of Kerguelen Petrels, 131 (1999), compared to four in 1998, Antarctic Fulmar 154 (1999), but only one in 1998, Fairy Prions 532 (1999), compared to 106 in 1998, White Headed Petrels 25 (1999) but only seven in 1998. Numbers of birds in most cases were higher in 1999 than in 1998 for the same months (July to December).

The atlas scheme for our region is well under way, with Tony Beauchamp doing a great job of numbering squares in the area and acting as liaison person. Some of our members are regular trampers, so a few out of the way areas have been covered as partial counts.

(Janet Snell)

## Auckland

We have a new RR, David Pye, who will assume the position with effect from June, while Nan Rothwell will continue as the region's Treasurer.

This year's meetings, usually attended by 35-40 members, have been notable for their range, both in subject matter and geographically. Following Sandra Morris' account in February of her visit to Enderby Island, the focus moved in March to the high Arctic with Pavel Tomkovich. Pavel had come to New Zealand through his contacts with the Wader Study Group in association with the Miranda Naturalists' Trust. We were privileged to hear him convey his rare knowledge of the remote wader breeding grounds in a talk illustrated with breathtaking slides of the birds and their spectacular habitat. Even to find the birds is an immense challenge in such vast areas.

In April Dick Veitch described a visit to the Galápagos. The prime object had been to advise on weed control, but naturally his talk ranged widely over the fauna and flora of the archipelago with due emphasis on the awful problem caused by the introduction of rats, cats, goats, pigs and donkeys to many of the islands. Dr Nigel Adams was the May speaker. Under the intriguing title "Flippers and Fish in the Roaring Forties" he described a study the feeding biology of the four species of penguins (King, Macaroni, Rockhopper and Gentoo) on Marion Island, where each has its own breeding and foraging pattern.

Auckland members attended the successful seabird identification workshop organised by Hugh Clifford at the Miranda Shorebird Centre. Encouraged by this event, the attendance at Muriwai Beach patrols has increased to enable all 26 kms to be covered regularly. Although few wrecks were picked up by the April or May patrols, the searchers were rewarded by the recovery of two banded birds; a gannet from White Island and a giant petrel with a South African band.

The seasonal survey of Tiritiri Matangi Island found Stitchbirds in

increased numbers and Kokako also well in evidence. Day visitors have been able to watch a Spotless Crake at the small pond within 50 metres of the wharf where Brown Teal may also be seen.

The annual census of NZ Dotterels is held in April when they are mainly found in post-breeding flocks. Thus on 11 April Waiheke Island's tally comprised a group of 16 dotterels at Te Matuku Bay, with a further four birds at Whakanewha Beach - a regional reserve where measures are taken to protect their nesting sites. The survey is an opportunity to check out Waiheke's other wader haunts which this year yielded counts of 67 Variable Oystercatchers, 50 Pied Stilts and 10 Banded Dotterels. This year NZ Dotterels bred successfully on Motuora Island, fledging two chicks. The island is also important as the nursery for Brown Kiwi (currently 13 birds) prior to their release on the mainland.

(Michael Taylor)

## South Auckland

The official events for the South Auckland region for 1999 concluded with a barbecue at Bill and Barbara Ormond's dwelling in the Pukekohe East area. This was a very hot day, so perhaps in future we should get Bill to organise the days for the census work, as it is almost invariably raining on the days that Tony Habraken chooses.

The February meeting was our Annual General Meeting and also a discussion on the bird mapping scheme. During this discussion there were a number of suggestions on how to keep track of the square bashing efforts, and all that is now required is for the RR to get organised. Mind you, there have been very few records so far for our region, apart from those completed by the RR.

The March meeting was an illustrated talk by Dr Pavel Tomkovich all the way from Russia, courtesy of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust. April saw Dick Veitch make his annual visit (excluding parties) to the South Auckland region. Dick in his usual way gave us an informative insight into the effects of rats on birds and measures that have been and will be taken to eradicate them from islands.

The May meeting saw David Lawrie, Tony Habraken and Gwenda Pulham describe their adventures during the five day tern banding trip to the southern coast of Australia hosted by the Victorian Wader Study Group.

Tony Habraken has been keeping a close eye on the Little Terns in the Manukau Harbour and the Firth of Thames, now that we are aware that there is a mixture of Australian and Asian birds in these localities. It would appear that in the last month there has been a changeover, with the Asian birds leaving and some evidence of the Australian birds returning. Over the summer, Tony, with





assistance from Ted Hoogendoorn with David Lawrie as scribe, managed to read sufficient numbers on a Little Tern band at the Firth of Thames to identify it as an individual banded as a chick at the nest on 20 June 1999 near Tokyo in Japan. This would appear to be the first actual evidence of the origin of the Asian race of the Little Tern that appears in New Zealand.

In the Manukau Harbour at the present time (middle of May) there is still a reasonable number of knots in breeding plumage. Presumably these birds have missed the bus for this current year, although there are very few coloured birds in the Firth of Thames.

(David Lawrie)

## Waikato

What happened in the Arctic last breeding season? Something good for godwits if our experience is anything to go by. At our annual November census of the three west coast harbours, we found numbers of godwits similar to the previous year at Raglan, but approximately double the figures of recent years at both Aotea and Kawhia.

The Australian Magpie is a controversial species in New Zealand. Many people have already decided that it is a harmful import and so considerable numbers are being eliminated in some districts. There is certainly plenty of experience to say that magpies are detrimental to other birds in our environment, but perhaps not many solid data to prove it. It was good to hear from John Innes of Landcare Research at our November meeting. He outlined the five year study which is being carried out in Waikato/Bay of Plenty to provide facts on the impact of magpies. The results will in time either support or challenge the views each of us might have on this subject now.

Our December meeting took the usual form of a pot luck dinner. The 30 people who attended not only enjoyed fine food, but also mental stimulation. Frank Bailey conducted one of his quiz sessions which are always a lot of fun, but also reveal some amazing bird and general knowledge among our members.

In February our speaker was Paul Cuming, who used the OSNZ slide collection to help with the important, and some would say difficult, task of wader identification.

At our AGM in March we had a summary of long-running studies on seabirds in the Shiant Islands, which are part of the Outer Hebrides. The speaker was David Steventon who lives in the UK, but has spent a few months recently working in Hamilton. It is always good having someone coming into our circle with a different range of experiences and a great enthusiasm for field ornithology in a new environment.

In April Hugh Clifford spoke on the birds of the Falkland Islands, South

Georgia, and the Antarctic Peninsula, which were seen during an 18-day voyage there in January/February.

It's been a busy time in the field, though it was extremely disappointing when a trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island was cancelled because the sea was too rough on the day. In February we made our annual wader-viewing visit to Kidds on the Manukau Harbour. It is always a treat to visit this prime site but it was a shame that so few people took advantage of the opportunity this year.

In March our field trip (or was it a meeting?) was on seabird identification. A crowd of dedicated beach patrollers (50 people), and a cloud of blowflies (number not exactly known) converged on Miranda Shorebird Centre for the day. The purpose (for the people) was to improve their skills at identifying live and dead seabirds. This workshop was arranged by Waikato region, and attended by members from there and also from Northland, Auckland, and South Auckland regions.

The award for dedication must go to the Northland contingent which drove down from Whangarei and back home the same day. However the trip was really worthwhile for everyone as our speakers/demonstrators were Graeme Taylor and



Graeme Taylor & Alan Tennyson

PHOTO: David Steventon

Alan Tennyson, who have outstanding knowledge of the subject. For visual aids they used slides, museum specimens, and fresh specimens (well, they were fresh once!) brought by beach patrollers. It was great to have the important features of each species pointed out. It was also good to be reminded of the care necessary in identifying beach-cast birds, and the need to take them home if there is any doubt at all, for someone more experienced and competent to check them.

In 1999, beach patrolling in the Waikato region totalled 326km with 841 birds being found, and there were certainly some periods of heavy bird mortality. Beach patrols this year have yielded very low numbers but we have had a couple of Hutton's Shearwaters which is unusual for us. We're not sure whether there have been more of them than usual, or whether it's just that our identification skills have improved.

There have also been a couple of instances of that rare prize, a banded bird. One was a Southern Giant Petrel, which had been banded as an adult at Marion Island in 1984. The other was a Sooty Shearwater which had been banded as an



Seabird workshop participants at Miranda.

PHOTO: John Simmons

adult at Kauwahaia Island off Bethells Beach in 1992. While it was found not terribly far from its place of banding, it has no doubt travelled plenty in the intervening eight years. Its history over this period is rather well known as it is a member of a colony that Graeme Taylor is studying.

Our annual census of Lake Waahi was carried out in April, the main difference from the previous year being a substantial increase in Canada Geese. Farmers in the area may not be happy unless the number seen that day (1750) is reduced considerably during the shooting season. Our three city lakes, two in Hamilton and one in Cambridge, continue to be counted monthly. The rearing of four Pied Shag chicks at Hamilton Lake has been a nice feature there, and an unusual sighting at Cambridge has been two Corellas flying over.

In March John and Stella Rowe, with Trevor and Daphne Taylor, carried out a bird count on all the hydro lakes on the Waikato River. This large task followed similar surveys carried out by John and Stella in 1992 and 1999. Substantial changes in the numbers of some species illustrate the value of repeating such surveys at intervals.

A Spine-tailed Swift was seen at Hamilton Gardens in December, and a flock of 16 Kereru flying over Waingaro Bush in April would have gladdened anyone's heart. Another unusual sight was a flock of 60-70 Little Black Shags flying up the Waikato River in Hamilton City in April (why won't they maintain a stable formation to make counting easier?). Three Kaka were seen in eucalypt trees at Tahuna in April.

What may have been the most unusual sighting has unfortunately not been confirmed yet. A farmer near Te Kauwhata reported an unusual raptor in late April. A visit to the 1000 acre farm by three members for a few hours in hopes of seeing



the bird was not successful. We were impressed with the farmer and one of his staff though. They seemed to be good observers and were both thoroughly familiar with harriers, which are very numerous there, on the edge of Whangamarino Swamp. They had each seen the bird on a different day at a different place, described its different appearance and behaviour, and drew the shape of its tail. It seemed most likely to be a Black Kite, a suggestion which they supported when shown illustrations of the species. So keep an eye on the sky, and maybe someone will see such a bird somewhere and get a confirmed identification.

Atlassing is continuing. What always looked a big project does not seem to get smaller as we get further into it. Waikato region contains 183 squares, which may not sound many to some regions, but to us it seems a hang of a lot!

(Hugh Clifford)

## Volcanic Plateau

This year sees a change in the way in which we meet. We have combined meetings with field trips and regular survey activities, with an emphasis on the mapping scheme outings. Our first meeting took place on 5 March at Rotorua. Six members and fiends visited Rotoehu Forest, and surveyed two areas in the forest as part of our atlas mapping work. We enticed two pairs of Kokako into our midst with the aid of taped calls and got excellent views of these shy forest dwellers. Other species recorded were Eastern Rosella, Bellbird, Kereru, Whitehead, Fantail and Grey Warbler.

Our next port of call was Te Wairoa Bay, on the shores of Lake Rotoehu, where we found a great variety of waterfowl including New Zealand Shoveler, NZ Dabchick, Grey Teal, Paradise Shelduck, Black, Little Black and Little Shag. We then stopped off at Hongi's Track on our way back to Rotorua, and encountered a few Riflemen the forest near the edge of the lake. We finished our outing with a superb barbecue lunch at Keith Owen's home, followed by a brief meeting.

Over the summer months we conducted our usual Banded Dotterel and gull/wader surveys at our main survey sites, and I was able to get the Department of Conservation's summer nature programme convenors to contribute to Banded Dotterel sightings recorded during some of the planned walks and outings. Unfortunately I have not yet received these records, but have been told that a few pairs were found in the Whangaehu River valley. My thanks to Harry Keys (CAS Tongariro/Taupo) for his help with this survey.

Other sightings include three New Zealand Falcons, seen together in the Waimarino Forest on 20 February, which continue to be regular visitors to central

Ohakune with reports on 3 March, and 5 and 10 April. A juvenile Spotless Crane was found dead at Trout Pool Road end, Okere Falls area, in January. Malay Spotted Doves have been seen around Murupara/Galatea during January and February.

(Kerry Oates)

## Taranaki

At the March meeting our submission to DoC on the Draft Management Plan for Egmont National Park was read to members and confirmed. We will support the monitoring of species and will assist with the same. DoC officers have released additional Blue Ducks into Egmont National Park. Barry Hartley gave a brief talk on the breeding of Variable Oystercatchers in our area. Observations point to a low success rate.

In April the Chairman congratulated Wayne Peters on receiving a Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Award for riparian planting on his farm. Peter Fryer spoke on the Shore Plover he had observed at the river mouth and Barry Hartley showed an excellent video of the bird. Our Annual General Meeting was held and Barry Hartley is the new Regional Representative for Taranaki, with no change in other officers.

On the February trip to the Waiongana river mouth the resident Variable Oystercatchers were easily observed moving about, and later in the afternoon 61+ Banded Dotterels landed on the sand bank about 20 metres from members. Great viewing!

Our March monthly outing was to the Waiwhakaho Track via the Mangaoraka car park. The weather was not suitable for bird observations so only nine species of bush birds were seen but the study of filmy ferns livened up a dull day!

Interesting observations include a New Zealand Pigeon eating damson plums, and another seen drinking from a bird bath, Whiteheads feeding their young in Egmont National Park, and Black-fronted Terns, one Wrybill and one probable Pectoral Sandpiper which were observed at coastal sites.

In the Waiongana River mouth area 12 species of waders and other seabirds were noted in March. Pied Stilt numbers were increasing and Pacific Golden Plovers had started to colour up. Off shore sightings included 500+ Fluttering Shearwaters feeding and one Arctic Skua.

One afternoon in late March, a New Zealand Falcon was observed flying with a live and very noisy Starling in one talon. A small flock of Starlings were mobbing the falcon and the trapped bird broke free. The falcon, probably a juvenile, flew into a nearby pine tree and the Starlings flew back to the roost, bristling with indignation I should think.

Members visited the Veronica walkway, above the camp house, in

Egmont National Park. Twelve species of birds were observed, with the best view that of a large flock of Silvereyes feeding on fruit of *Pseudopanax simplex*.

(Rosemary Messenger)

## Wanganui

In April we visited the Waitotora river mouth and nearby lagoon where we saw seventeen native bird species including four Variable Oystercatchers, a spoonbill, two shovelers keeping a low profile amongst a mass of seemingly apprehensive Mallards awaiting the commencement of duckshooting season, and plenty of kingfishers. After much debate we cut across some swampy ground where we encountered a Fernbird confirming that it was the correct way for us to have gone!

In March an excellent talk was given by Ian Saville who showed us how to differentiate between Common, White-fronted and Arctic Terns, which was done using very good video footage of birds taken in the Manawatu Estuary. This was followed by more quality video footage taken during an OceanWings trip that Ian and Brent Stephenson went on. Well, one section of the footage was of lesser quality and was footage of an unusual gull that Ian and Brent failed to see on the day but was picked up when looking at the video later on! It clearly illustrated the abundance and variety of birds to be seen off the Kaikoura Coast.

(Tim Holmes)

## Manawatu

After the excitement of the December/January period the Manawatu Estuary calmed down a little through the late summer, though there were still some pretty good birds to be seen.

The previously reported Japanese Snipe was last seen on 2 April, and there were at least two (maybe three) Common Terns. A White Heron and a Little Egret took up residence through February and March, with the latter staying into early May at least.

Other large white birds of note were a flock of 12 Cattle Egrets at Whirokino - a welcome return after several years' absence, and a record flock of 98 Royal Spoonbills in April. There were two separate Chestnut Teals in March and April. A Little Tern has been present since mid-summer and by the beginning of May it had assumed breeding plumage. Not a particularly rare bird, but an unusual sight was an adult Arctic Skua (apparently quite healthy) sitting on the estuary mud on 27 April.

On the wader front an orange flagged Bar-tailed Godwit, first seen in February, remained into May, and two of our Red Knots also sported orange flags. After last



year, only three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers was a meagre total, but there were also three Pectoral Sandpipers (with one staying into May), and one of the Curlew Sandpipers also remains into May. We ended up with eight Red-necked Stints and some of them were in excellent plumage prior to departure, as were many of the 25-30 Pacific Golden Plovers. Our Grey-tailed Tattler left around mid-April - let's hope it makes it back in October.

Away from the Estuary there are two really significant birds to report. Firstly, a Brown Quail was seen near Foxton, by Jim Moore in late March - this is the first record for the region for many years and may indicate that there is a relict population in the area. Secondly, an immature Blue Duck was reported near Apiti in April. It is hoped that the extra searching required for the atlas project will give us a better insight into the status of this species.

(Ian Saville)

## Wairarapa

The atlas scheme is proving to be of great interest. We have made a promising start, with several field trips covering areas seldom visited, obtaining good lists of birds and discovering that the task is not quite as daunting or complicated as first thought.

Notable sightings recently include a Fairy Prion found on the outskirts of Masterton on 1 February 2000. Also in February, a Long-tailed Cuckoo was both seen and heard at Totara Flat, near the Mt Holdsworth car park. 15 Royal Spoonbills have been observed at Lake Wairarapa, along with three Australasian Bitterns at the Oparua spillway (Lake Wairarapa).

To encourage more in depth study, each of our members has been asked to give a five minute talk on a bird species of their choice or a book review. We have been treated to several excellent talks creating further discussion.

(Miles King)

## Wellington

Long-time member, Peg Fleming, who died on 26 February 2000, was remembered with respect at the region's Annual General Meeting in March. Peg always supported with her interest and enthusiasm the work of fellow members, and she will be sadly missed.

All regional officers were re-appointed, together with a very willing committee. The meeting then got down to the serious business of the evening to consider a whodunit entitled "The History and Mystery of C.I. Snipe".

Three years ago, while looking for Campbell Island Teal, DoC staff

discovered snipe on an off-shore rocky island. But how to identify this snipe? To an attentive briefing, C.J. Miskelly disclosed the biological and forensic evidence, and identified, located and analysed diary entries and other records of four historical observers, to present an ornithological thriller that left no doubt that the men and women of the Crown can be relied upon to find the truth.

On 15 March 2000 a large gathering enjoyed an opportunity to hear Dr Pavel Tomkovich, Russian authority on Arctic waders.

April's meeting was given an update to what is happening on Kapiti Island, by Julie Newell, assistant ranger. A few days later members visited Mount Bruce, where Glen Holland explained the work there and showed Shore Plovers and Brown Teal, as well as Kaka, released birds that return daily for feeding.

In May, David Medway discussed the contribution to New Zealand ornithology made by Captain Cook, which related mainly to his second voyage.

24 months of harbour survey will conclude in June, after which, now thoroughly disciplined by the Regional Representative, the 25 or more volunteers will shift focus to the mapping scheme.

On Mana Island this last season, 32 juvenile NZ Robins were banded to make a total population of about 60. There were also 30 to 40 Sooty Shearwater chicks and five Common Diving Petrels, and some fresh diving petrel burrows were found. Mana Island is likely to attract considerable attention if an ambitious proposal goes ahead with the support of DoC. This is to translocate suitable rare species there, commencing with Fernbirds. Still in committee stage, this project will involve cooperation with the Friends of Mana and OSNZ Manawatu, study of the literature, extensive training sessions for mistnetting, and surveys of the proposed resource near Foxton - and should make the next few years particularly interesting.

(Rod Orange)

## Nelson

The Nelson region has a new RR. Many thanks to Peter Gaze who held the position for several years and a welcome to David Melville who until recently headed the WWF in Hong Kong.

In March we held a very successful joint meeting with the Nelson Science Society when Dr Pavel Tomkovich spoke to a standing room only crowd about what 'our' waders do when they are not in New Zealand. We are grateful to the Miranda Naturalists' Trust for inviting Pavel to NZ and for sharing him with the South Island.

We are planning a survey of breeding coastal shore birds from Nelson to Farewell Spit for next summer - this will include Banded Dotterel, Variable Oystercatcher and Banded Rail. We are

also planning a regional effort to achieve better understanding of the movement of Spotted Shags.

Willie Cook recently sighted a colour-banded White-fronted Tern which had been marked on the Boulder Bank in 1982 and Henk Heinekamp trapped and released an Australasian Harrier that he had personally banded in 1991.

Observations at Farewell Spit in the first quarter of the year resulted in a number of Australian-flagged Red Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits being seen. There have been up to two White-winged Black Terns in the Waimea Estuary area.

Other observations from Waimea Estuary included, on 8 April, several shags which were perched on driftwood in close proximity. They comprised one Pied, two adults and a young Black, two Little and a young Little and one Little Black - a really interesting mix in such a small group.

Also at Waimea, on 22 April, a flock of 500 Bar-tailed Godwits was feeding on a sand bar when they suddenly wheeled into the air. It became apparent they were chasing a Spur-winged Plover. The chase continued for two to three minutes until the plover retreated from the area. Most godwits returned to the ground but a small group then a single bird continued to chase the plover until it left the area. A few minutes later the godwits again took flight, this time to chase a White-faced Heron which was calling loudly. After a minute the godwits returned to the ground and the heron also returned to feed in the area. Half an hour later four Spur-winged Plovers landed near the godwits but there was no further disturbance. The godwits were in non-breeding plumage and are probably wintering over at the estuary. Is such mobbing behaviour common amongst these birds?

In a nearby estuary channel 66 Little Black Shags were perched on driftwood. We believe the nearest breeding site is in the Waikato.

The Pied Shags in the Rough Island colony continue to nest, with thirty chicks hatching in the month between 27 March and 28 April. This number was obtained through collecting the egg shells on the ground beneath the trees, then crushing and discarding them at each visit. Black Shags also nest at this colony but the last clutch hatched about 11 January. This date was estimated using information in the paper on Black Shags by R.G. Powlesland and P.J. Reese in the December 1999 *Notornis*.

(Gillian Pollock)

## Canterbury

The Canterbury branch has moved into more comfortable quarters, hiring rooms at the Spreydon Bowling Club for its monthly evening meetings, and attendances are rising again. Better seating and more space have enabled more

activities to be put on at these sessions. These included a hands-on night of practical bird science on 1 May, when members had a chance to handle fresh specimens, specimens from the Canterbury Museum collection, and got to practice banding and making noose-mats.

This quarter has also seen the AGM with Nick Allen re-elected as regional rep, and the regional award, the Philip Howell Trophy, awarded to Sheila Petch for her outstanding service to ornithology in Canterbury.

The evening sessions have heard addresses by Amanda Byrne on New Zealand Robins in the Marlborough Sounds, and John Dowding on New Zealand Dotterels, particularly the Stewart Island population.

Members farewelled the wading birds with a visit to Lake Ellesmere on April 15, led by Colin Hill. The party was still assembling at the lake end of Embankment Road when a Little Whimbrel put in an appearance in a paddock nearby, feeding with some Spur-winged Plovers. The group ventured on to Greenpark Sands where counting turned up 57 Red-necked Stints, 895 Banded Dotterels, 65 Wrybills, 99 Pied Stilts, a Lesser Knot, a Curlew Sandpiper, and 14 Pacific Golden Plovers.

Regular beach patrols are being carried out by Canterbury members. Nine of us spent 13 May logging up the shingle beach of Kaitorete Spit, classifying, measuring, and recording the dead seabirds along this exposed piece of coast beside Lake Ellesmere. The two parties each covered about seven kilometres. Among the finds were four White-flipped Penguins, almost 30 Sooty Shearwaters, a Broad-billed Prion and a Fairy Prion, an Australasian Gannet, and some Spotted Shags. Nick Allen saw a large number of Hutton's or Fluttering Shearwaters passing by out to sea during the day. It was a quite a hard walk, on a cold day, with occasional light showers and a big surf running.

The May field trip was a chance to look for Cirl Buntings, which had recently been reported in the Halswell Quarry area, but they proved very elusive, mainly thanks to the weather. The rain set in just as the party was heading out from Halswell Quarry carpark and the birds seemed to have more sense than those who were watching them – they headed for cover. There were a few glimpses of the Cirl Buntings and the ranger also told us that a pair of Tui have been seen at the quarry about that time for the last two years, and he was waiting for their appearance this year. Our group moved on to Hoon Hay Valley, and parked along the roadside, to check out the hillside above the road. Some Cirl Buntings were sighted up there, but a better day was needed for a better look.

Recent sightings include a Glossy Ibis at Travis Swamp, back for its second winter, and a bittern in the same area. A group sighted seven albatross species on an Ocean Wings trip off Kaikoura. Steve

Wratten said the group also saw Cape Pigeons, Westland Petrels, Common Diving Petrels, and a few Hutton's Shearwaters. There were 260 Black-fronted Terns on the beach near the township.

(David Clarkson)

## Southland

A re-examination of a moulting penguin found dead on Colac Bay on 23 February 1997 shows that it is not a Snares Crested Penguin as previously thought, but either a Royal or Macaroni. There is a very sparse yellow crest but it starts in the middle of the forehead, and not above the eyes as in other crested penguins. Macaronis and Royals are subspecies and can be hard to tell apart, although the Royal usually has white cheeks and the Macaroni black cheeks. This one has grey cheeks.

Monitoring of Black Swans, Paradise Shelducks and Canada Geese by Southland Fish and Game gives the following results: the Black Swan population in Otago and Southland has shown an overall increase in the past eight years. The Southland population is around 3,000 birds and Otago's about 4,800. Paradise Shelducks are counted while moulting in their known moulting places. Figures from January 1999 indicate a drop in the coastal population from 4,217 to 4,018 in a year and a drop in the inland population from 13,215 to 11,501. The estimated waterfowl take in Southland during the shooting season is: Mallard 100,000, Paradise Shelduck 8,500, Shoveler 500, Grey Duck, Canada Goose and Pukeko, several hundred of each. No swans appeared in the survey although some were certainly taken.

It is estimated that at least 70% of the population, or at least 2,500 Canada Geese, need to be harvested each year to maintain the birds at levels which will satisfy both hunters and farmers. It is believed that special goose culls will be required in 2000.

At our last meeting Roger Sutton spoke about his work trying to establish game birds in Southland. A huge effort was put into the Grey Partridge with no long-term success. Partridges established briefly and bred for several years in several Southland localities, before declining and disappearing. Roger compared the temperature and rainfall range in Southland and Europe, from where the birds originated, and found that the summer here is both cooler and wetter than in Europe. Adverse weather just as the eggs hatch in December could be enough to reduce breeding success to below replacement level.

The many attempts to establish pheasants here, also with no long-term success, suggest that climatic factors are involved with this species as well. Roger suggested that the only way to have a successful pheasant hunt in Southland was to release captive-raised birds in the morning and shoot them in the afternoon. Chukar and Californian Quail are widespread in Central Otago and barely extend into Southland - the southernmost limit of Chukar is Mid Dome.

Three Otago members visited in February, and were pleased to see Little Terns, Cattle Egrets and spoonbills among other things at Waituna Lagoon. In April Glen Frew saw strange bird that appeared to be injured in a swampy drain at Waimatua. From his description it appears to be a Marsh Crane. Ian Southey, very familiar with the species, reports an Orange-fronted Parakeet near Borland Lodge, and Delia Petra from Gore heard a possible Kokako in the Taringaturas at the end of 1998. She is familiar with the calls from her earlier days in the Coromandel. Peter McClelland reports that two Norwegian tourists spotted a female Chestnut-breasted Shelduck on the Redcliffs wetland in March. Two recent inland Fiordland records of Grey-backed Storm Petrel are Borland Road on 24 November 1998 and a skeleton from Gertrude Saddle collected in 1999.

(Lloyd Esler)

## Southland bird study week

Council has approved a week long bird study course to be held in Southland 3-10 January 2001. The course will be based at Camp Longwood at Riverton which will be a useful and central place from which to access various places of interest.

### Proposed projects are:

- 1) Aparima River Survey looking at birds using and breeding in the riverbed, especially Black-fronted Dotterels and nesting colonies of Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns.
- 2) Full beach patrol along the 26km of Oreti Beach.
- 3) Comprehensive wader count in Bluff Harbour and Invercargill estuary.
- 4) Black-backed Gull banding and/or Black-billed Gull banding and possibly other species.
- 5) Visit to Fiordland possibly including Takahe breeding programme, Yellowheads at Lake Gunn, Rock Wrens and Kea at Homer Tunnel and birdlife at Borland Lodge. There would be one-night stops at Borland Lodge and Milford Lodge.
- 6) Visits to some of Southland's best bird areas taking the opportunity to cover some of our 375 survey squares.
- 7) Evening programme of short talks, competitions, practical training sessions and excursions to take advantage of the long Southland evenings.

Participants might like to extend their stay by visiting Stewart Island or the Catlins area or doing some of the tracks.

**Expressions of interest, by 31 August please, to Lloyd Esler 15 Mahuri Rd Otatara RD9 Invercargill phone/fax (03) 213 0404 or email [esler@southnet.co.nz](mailto:esler@southnet.co.nz).**





# WHAT'S ON



## Northland

- 13 July - evening meeting videos (Who's Killing the Kiwi?, and Kiwi S.O.S.)
- 15 July - Dargaville West Coast beach patrol
- 18 July - east coast beach patrol

Date to be arranged: weeding of shell bank in Whangarei Harbour ring Richard Parrish (09) 436 1988

Mist netting of Silvereyes in the early mornings out at Glenbervie at Grachen's property, ring Ray Pierce

- 10 August - evening meeting
- 12 August - Dargaville West Coast beach patrol
- 15 August - east coast beach patrol
- 19 & 20 August - boat trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island, 15 people, ring Lorna Simpkin
- 9 September - Dargaville West Coast beach patrol

12 September - east coast beach patrol

14 September - evening meeting



## Auckland

4 July - evening meeting, Kohia Teachers' Centre, College of Education. Black-billed Gulls. Ph. David Pye (09) 410 2879

9 July - Muriwai beach patrol. Ph. John Simmons (09) 828 8642

1 August - evening meeting, Gordon Ell, Mongolia

5 August - Muriwai beach patrol

26 August - Robin survey, Wenderholm. Ph. Tim Lovegrove (09) 480 6587

5 September - evening meeting, robins at Wenderholm

10 September - Muriwai beach patrol

3 October - evening meeting, Geoff Moon, forest birds

7 October - Muriwai beach patrol

2 October - Tawharanui survey, Ph. Tim Lovegrove (09) 480 6587



## South Auckland

11 July - evening meeting, Papakura Croquet Rooms, Chapel Street. Rats and Islands. Ph. David Lawrie (09) 238 8407.

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.

## Taranaki

Evening meetings, Taranaki Museum, New Plymouth. Dates for 2000 4 July, 1 August, 5 September, 3 October, 7 November, 5 December. Ph. David Medway (06) 758 0370.

## Wanganui

Evening meetings, fourth Tuesday of the month, Davis Lecture Theatre, Whanganui Regional Museum (Watt St). Ph Tim Holmes (06) 343 6808

Field trips:

2 July - Kaitake Lake, Spotless Crakes

23 July - Virginia Lake and Westmere Lake, coot count

13 August - Christies Lake

## Manawatu

Evening meetings - held every three months at the Lido Centre, Park Street, Palmerston North, 8 pm.

Beach Patrols - 1st Wednesday of each month and on other beaches at irregular times. Ph Brian Tyler (06) 368 1489 for meeting times and places.

## Wairarapa

12 July - evening meeting 7.30pm at Janet & Tenick Dennison's, 129 Renall St, Masterton, Helen Gummer, Chatham Islands

16 July - field trip, meet 1.30pm at Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre, phone Betty Watt (06) 378 6259

## Wellington

Beach Patrols Jean Luke (04) 293 5601

Evening Meetings first Monday of the month at 7.45pm, new venue from 3 July 2000 at DoC Offices, Central Library

## Nelson

Monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month. Venues vary. Ph. David Melville (03) 543 3628

## Canterbury

22 July - field trip to Ashburton Lakes, phone Don Geddes (03) 308 6489 (members from the south of the region), or Ron Nilsson (03) 338 8936.

31 July - evening meeting, Chris Challies — "What's all this nonsense about the Penguin Parade on Godley Head?", plus Jill West — classified summarised notes.

27 August - field trip to Okuku/Lees Valley/Glentui for atlassing. Phone Bev Alexander (03) 313 7009.

28 August - Evening meeting, Paul Sagar - Buller's Molliesmawks.

Evening meetings are held at the Spreydon Bowling Club rooms, Domain Terrace, starting at 7.30pm.

## Otago

4 July - Science Festival meeting, Cliff Skeggs Gallery, Dunedin Town Hall, 8pm speaker Ewan Fordyce on the history of NZ birds

16 July - Science Festival trip to Aramoana, meet 2pm at the Aramoana hall, ring Louise Foord (03) 467 5041

23 August - meeting 8pm speaker Dean Nelson on Kakapo

25 October - meeting 8pm speaker Stuart Mitchell on Black Swans

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

## PLEASE NOTE

**Deadline for the SEPTEMBER issue will be 10 AUGUST**



