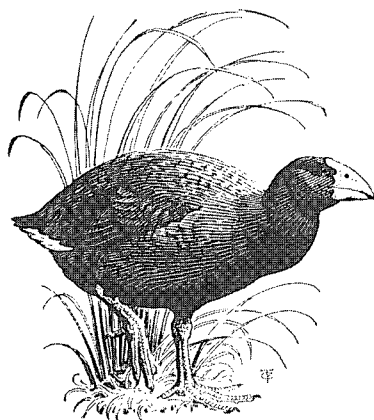




Southern Bird

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Quotation

*The music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain egg of
the nightingale*

ALFRED TENNYSON

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Cover Photo

Australasian Gannets are one of our few recent avian success stories. Numbers around New Zealand appear still to be increasing, although the reasons are currently unknown. These breeding birds were photographed at the famous mainland Cape Kidnappers colony by Brent Stephenson, who is undertaking a PhD study of the species.

Apologies to Barry Hartley and Wayne Twyde for the inadvertent transposition of the credits for front and back cover harrier photos in the last issue, and for the misspelling of Barry's name!

Publisher

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We welcome Advertising enquiries.

Shining Cuckoo Arrival Dates

For the past 16 years we have recorded the date of first hearing the call of the Shining Cuckoo on its return migration to breed in New Zealand in Titirangi, Auckland. A large tree on top of the rather open ridge where we live attracts the birds that often (but not always it seems) arrive in association with some pronounced frontal weather. Such conditions probably help them with the sea crossings from Indonesia, PNG, and the Solomon Islands, where, sensibly, most live during our winter.

An interesting note in the NZ Field Guide tells us that some cuckoos do over-winter in the northern parts of New Zealand. I have often wondered how some of the late season cuckoos seen being fed by Grey Warblers could muster enough strength and savvy in what remains of the summer season to survive a long migration flight.

To me there just isn't enough time before due departure date. I therefore question why the birds would bother breeding so late. If the late season chicks over-wintered that would make sense of that and given the mild Northland climate and environment my guess is the survival rate would be high. If any *Southern Bird* readers have anyone actually seen a Shining Cuckoo in winter it would be interesting to hear from you.

Meanwhile back in Titirangi on the edge of the Waitakere Ranges, the average arrival date for the past 16 years from our records is the 26 September. You will however notice dates in some years both 11 days earlier and later than this. Our interpretation is that the migration happens in waves.

This year we had a single bird calling in the tree on 15 September. As I write this article over a week later on the evening of 24 September that is still the only bird we have heard this year. Maybe that individual was early because it still had a long way to go before reaching a breeding ground perhaps way down in the South Island? Who knows, but my guess is that our summer resident birds will be with us before this weekend.

The dates :

5 October 1986	27 September 1987	24 September 1988
21 September 1989	16 September 1990	18 September 1991
28 September 1992	26 September 1993	26 September 1994
7 October 1995	28 September 1996	28 September 1997
27 September 1998	26 September 1999	23 September 2000
15 September 2001		

MIKE GRAHAM



RANGITATA RIVER – *still outstanding for Wrybills*

On 20-21 October 2001, 16 km (43%) of the upper Rangitata River were resurveyed between the Havelock-Clyde confluence and the Rangitata Gorge. We resurveyed the area counted by Moore (1986). Wrybills were recorded nesting along the whole length during this and recent surveys by Dr Jim Jolly.

Assuming that densities of Wrybills along the stretch we surveyed were typical of the rest of this 37 km-long braided river, using simple extrapolation we estimate the number of Wrybills using this river may number approximately 2300 birds. This would represent ca. 60% of the estimated New Zealand breeding population of 3800 birds.

This estimate is based on Riegen & Dowding's recent census of 4100-4200 birds, assuming 10% of the population is non-breeding. This is a crude, but reasonable, estimate to indicate the order of magnitude of the population size. Examination of aerial photographs indicates that the section we surveyed is reasonably typical of the rest of the upper river. The only difference was that the river begins to narrow in the 8 km before the gorge. Dr Jim Jolly has recently counted high numbers in this area.

A total of 1705 birds was counted (Table 1), slightly down on the 2082 birds recorded in 1986. The major difference was the much lower total of Banded Dotterels recorded. All other species had similar or higher counts. Higher counts likely reflect better visibility and coverage of the riverbed, rather than significant increases in numbers.

All waders were breeding. Four small nesting colonies (max 20 birds each) of the threatened Black-fronted Terns were recorded.

The 2001 survey was slightly longer (16 km, cf 13 km) than the 1986 survey, and was carried out in better weather conditions (fine, calm, high cloud on 21st, low cloud on 20th). Therefore visibility would have been significantly better in 2001 than 1986. Like in the 1986 survey, the high water levels meant we could not cross the major river channels. Therefore we could only sample 25-30% of the width of the river.

Methods followed the standard from NZ Wildlife Service index counts (O'Donnell & Moore 1983; Robertson et al. 1983). Observers spread evenly across the river sections, recording all aquatic birds as they passed upstream. We surveyed the north bank of the river only because of high river flows. We did this in two sections: 10 km from Clyde/Havelock confluence to Potts Delta (divided into two reaches: main river and Deep Creek), and 6 km from Potts Delta down. The division between the sections was the end of the shelter belt at grid reference 423-326 (NZMS 260, J36). Observers were: Steve Baker, Joy Comrie, Robin Delamore, Don Geddes, Andy Grant, Jim Jolly, Kelvin Joyce, Colin O'Donnell, Moira Pryde, Martin Rutledge, Frances Schmechel, Deb Zanders.

COLIN O'DONNELL & FRANCES SCHMECHEL

Table 1. Wetland birds recorded during counts of the upper Rangitata River, 1986 & 2001.

River section	Clyde/Havelock confluence- 3 km below Potts Delta (Moore 1986)	Clyde/Havelock confluence- Potts Delta (21 Oct 2001DOC survey)		Potts Delta – Harper Range Bluff (21 Oct 2001 DOC survey)	TOTAL 2001 (21 Oct 2001 DOC survey)
		Main stream	Deep Creek		
Km surveyed	13	10		6	16
Time (hrs)		4.5	3	3	10.5
No. observers		6	6	6	
% river width covered	<25%	30%		25%	
black shag	8	3	3	5	11
white-faced heron	3	1	5	2	8
black swan	1				
Canada goose	132	54	16	126	196
paradise shelduck	83	15	18	6	39
Mallard	13	10	39	5	54
grey duck	10		6	1	7
NZ scaup			1		1
NZ shoveler	2		8		8
Unidentified duck sp.	21				
SI pied oystercatcher	131	26	25	28	79
spur-winged plover	59	15	16	8	39
banded dotterel	859	147	40	146	333
wrybill	139	64	24	166	254
pied stilt	20	8	13	31	52
hybrid black stilt	2	1	1		2
black-backed gull	110	116	10	48	174
black-billed gull	190	61	4	84	149
Caspian tern	1	2	1		3
black-fronted tern	248	76	61	143	280
harrier	Nc	2	3	2	7
welcome swallow		5	4		9
NZ pipit	Nc	11	12	46	
TOTALS					1705

Nc = no count

Rare Birds Committee - 6 monthly report

The following sightings have been **accepted** by the Committee since preparation of the report in *Southern Bird* 6: 8-10:

UBR 10B/01 - Report from Jim Moore of up to 2 **Japanese Snipe** seen at Manawatu Estuary on various dates between 27 January and 26 March 2001. No doubt these are the same Japanese Snipe to which **UBRS 10/01, 10A/01 and 51/01** refer.

UBR 36/01 - Report from Nick Allen of single **Red-necked Phalarope** seen by himself, Ron Nilsson, Shannon Lloyd and Bev Alexander at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere on 16 December 2000.

UBR 46/01 - Report and photographs from Jan Walker of single **Broad-billed Sandpiper** seen by herself, Colin Hill, Sheila Petch and others at Lake Ellesmere between 18 January & 27 February 2001.

UBR 47/01 - Report and photograph from Barry Hartley of single **Black Stilt** seen at Mokau Estuary between 15 March & 7 May 2001.

UBR 48/01 - Report and photographs from Colin Hill of single **Long-toed Stint** seen at Lake Ellesmere on 6, 7 & 16 December 2000. This is the **second accepted New Zealand record** of the species. The first accepted record was **UBR 98/13** in which Colin Hill was also involved.

UBR 49/01 - Report from Marion Macbeth of single **Australasian Little Grebe** seen at The Groyne Recreation Area, Christchurch on 3 occasions between 15 & 20 June 2000.

UBR 50/01 - Report from Tony Wilson of single **Wilson's Storm Petrel** seen off Kaikoura on 30 November 1998.

UBR 51/01 - Report from Tony Wilson of 2 **Japanese Snipe** seen at Manawatu Estuary on 10 March 2001.

UBR 52/01 - Report from Tony Wilson of single **Asiatic Dowitcher** seen at Maketu Estuary on 25 November 1998.

UBR 53/01 - Report from Tony Crocker of single **Australasian Little Grebe** seen by himself and others at Otautu Bay, Lake Rotoehu on 2 June 2001.

UBR 54/01 - Report from Colin Miskelly of partial albino **Red-billed Gull** seen by himself and others at main Chatham Island on 28 April & 12 May 2001.

UBR 55/01 - Report from Colin Miskelly of single **Yellow-nosed Albatross** seen by himself and Mike Thorsen from the coast of Rangatira/South East Island on 1 May 2001.

UBR 56/01 - Report from Lloyd Esler of single **Oriental Cuckoo** seen at Queens Park, Invercargill on 25 April 1998.

UBR 57/01 - Report from Lloyd Esler of single **Large Sand Dotterel** seen at Awarua Bay on 8 January 2001.

UBR 58/01 - Report from Jim Moore of single **Chestnut Teal** seen at Manawatu Estuary on 14 April & 5 May 2001.

UBR 59/01 - Report from Jim Moore of 2 **Brown Skuas** seen just offshore at Foxton Beach on 29 October 2000.

UBR 60/01 - Report from Jim Moore of single **Little Egret(s)** seen at Manawatu Estuary on various dates between 13 April & 6 May 2001. These sightings probably relate to the same individual which Jim Moore saw again at Manawatu Estuary on 27 July 2001 and at Foxton No.1 Lake the following day.

UBR 61/01 - Report from Colin Miskelly of single immature **Fiordland Crested Penguin** seen and photographed by Barry Styles at Wairaka Scenic Reserve (south of Pukerua Bay, Wellington) on 15 January 2001.

UBR 62/01 - Report from Shawn Loewen of single **Little Egret** seen by himself, Colleen McKerrow & Brian Jones at Jordan's Farm, Kaipara Harbour on 23 June 2001.

UBR 63/01 - Report and photographs from Barry Hartley of 4 **Fairy Martins** seen with Welcome Swallows at Pungaere Stream, Rahu on 5 September 2001.

UBR 64/01 - Report from Philip Crutchley of single **Cape Barren Goose** seen between Sutherlands and Cave, South Canterbury on 3 September 2001.

UBR 65/01 - Report from Nick Allen of single **Cape Barren Goose** seen at Waikuku between 3 August & 19 September 2001.

UBR 66/01 - Report and photographs from Peter & Julie Fryer of single **Siberian (Grey-tailed) Tattler** seen at the Waiongana River mouth near New Plymouth on various occasions between 8 October & 7 November 2000.

UBR 69/01 - Report from Brent Stephenson of single **Siberian (Grey-tailed) Tattler** seen at Ahuriri Estuary, Napier on 17 September 2001.

UBR 71/01 - Report and photographs from Graeme Taylor and Colin Miskelly of **Erect-crested Penguin** ashore at Whirinaiki Bluff area, north of Napier, in late March 2001.

The following sighting has **not been accepted** by the Committee:

UBR 45/01 - Report from Stuart Nicholson of suspected **Baird's Sandpiper** seen at Awarua Bay, Southland on 8 January 2001.

The following reports were **still under consideration** by the Committee at the time of writing:

UBR 39/01 - Report from David Roberts of suspected **frigatebird** seen at Mangere, Chatham Islands on 27 January 2001.

UBR 67/01 - Report from Stuart Nicholson of suspected **Asiatic Dowitcher** seen at Tamaki Estuary on 8 August 2001.

UBR 68/01 - Report from Stuart Nicholson of suspected **Mongolian Dotterel** seen at Farewell Spit on 26 January 2000.

UBR 70/01 - Report from Peter Fryer of suspected **White-eyed Duck** seen at New Plymouth on 31 October 2001.

DAVID MEDWAY
Convenor



Broad-billed Sandpiper, Manawatu Estuary 9/3/92

Photo: David Medway

Atlas Update

Since the AGM in June, the Atlas team has reorganised the administration and storage of the records with the assistance of Stuart Nicholson, Derek and Ros Batcheler. Some 8,000 record sheets had been received by mid-November 2001 - a metre and a half of shelf space already.

All observers from whom we have received sheets have been advised of their unique ID number. This will save them a lot of writing of addresses etc on the record sheets. As many of the record sheets are forwarded first to recorders or RRs within regions, they may not yet have been returned to the Atlas office. Accordingly, if you have sent Atlas sheets and not been allocated an observer number, please enquire.

The computer entry of data, relating to observer, date, effort, location and number of species sighted is continuing, so that we will be able to produce further maps of coverage relating to effort in the early part of 2002, after the second complete year of the scheme. About 7,700 records have been added to the database so far by Derek Batcheler. This means that we can now check for any gross errors in location grid references (such as those placing the recording locality out at sea). Stuart Nicholson is doing a sterling job in chasing up strange locations with observers.

Observers are reminded to check the list of birds which require reporting to the **Rare Birds Committee** which can be found on the Society website along with a reporting form. You can also obtain this information and forms from RRs if you have no web access.

The Atlas record sheet has the most common 100 species from the last atlas printed on the form. Any additional species are recorded in spaces below the printed list. As an example, Turkeys are widespread and are clearly not all domesticated stock. Records seem to show a wide distribution of Cape Barren Geese, which suggests that more than escaped 'zoo' stock may be involved. We will remark more on some of these interesting items in future issues of *Southern Bird*.

So far, some 470 observers have provided records accessioned into the scheme, and the numbers are growing all the time. This is just over half of the total of observers who participated in the last Atlas scheme, but there are still three years to go to the end of the project. Some regions have mounted seriously coordinated 'campaigns' to ensure that their regions are well covered. We note that quite a number of the observers are not members of the Society, so there is a challenge there to involve them in more activities.

Remember that the minimum target is to reach EACH SQUARE AT LEAST ONCE IN EACH SEASON, during the five years of the project. As we approach the end of the second year of the scheme, the Atlas office has received at least one record from 62% of the squares for the 3 main islands and a number from the Chatham Is.

Some interesting statistics are already becoming evident. The top 10 observers (or teams) have provided 37% of the records received so far. The leading observer at this stage is Barry Hartley with 438 sheets returned. Also in the top ten are Bev Alexander, Paul Cuming, Geoff Foreman, Bill Cash, Lloyd Esler, Stuart Nicholson, Hugh Clifford, Nick Allen, and the Rowe team of Stella and John. The latter are just leading in a close tussle with Stuart Nicholson for the greatest number of squares covered - 228 v 227.

If we make a general estimate of the time spent in

making observations, there have already been about 7,000 day equivalents spent looking at birds, quite apart from the driving involved to get there. On the basis of an average of 80 km travelled per square record, observers have already travelled some 650,000 km at this stage of the project. We won't attempt to estimate how many kilometres have been walked, or how many hours have been spent in filling out sheets! A magnificent voluntary effort!!

On average, observers are recording 19 species per square. This means that we now have 152,000 observations of individual species and their habitat use. The maximum for one sheet is 71 species, and so far 59 sheets have recorded more than 50 species. The leading square includes Tiritiri Matangi Island, which is a great advertisement for the area and its reconstructed habitat. However, we need to emphasise that the number of records on a sheet does not show the numbers which may be recorded within that square. These data will only come when all the species information is entered and we are able to get such totals.

The three most popular locations so far are 2650:5980 (40 sheets); 2660:6480 (37) and 2310:5470 (35). There will be a small prize available for the first person who advises the Convenors at the address below, where all three grid squares are located. RRs and any person named in this article are excluded from entering. There will be some other interesting challenges during the next three years.

Of special interest are those observers who are maintaining observations throughout a season at specific localities. They will be getting the benefit of noting changes in their area as they occur during the project.

From mid-September to mid November, we have been undertaking trials of the entry and storage methods for adding the habitat and species data into the database system. This will enable all parts of the records to be collated and the first species and habitat progress maps to be produced during 2002. The software, mapping and statistical preparation is being coordinated by Pasi Hyvonen, who works for Eagle Technology, and the development of the entry programmes has been generously provided from outside the Society by Ross Pickard.

The beginning of December marked the start of the new summer recording period. You should be collating your spring records and getting them sent in. Also the time to check your supplies of forms and to stock up now for the third year of the scheme. Please keep a good eye out for BREEDING RECORDS which are an important part of the Atlas data recording. Equally important is the need to try and cover as many HABITATS as possible in your observation square, to provide a better understanding of habitat use by our birds.

General points to note are:-

- From July 2001 the new printing of the forms includes a box for the number of species recorded on the sheet. If your sheet does not have this box to the right of 'Full List' please put your tally of species in the space there and surround it by a ring.
- Please do NOT make photocopies of the data sheets as they deteriorate rapidly with handling. If you need more recording sheets, please order more.
- Please write your name clearly on the form. The first name of multiple observers will be the person



contacted if there are any queries. Please record others who have participated in the observations for that record.

- Bird seen in the air within a square can be recorded for that square. Birds found dead in a square can be counted EXCEPT where they are found on or near a coastline.

In October, all RRs were given maps showing the coverage of the first 5,600 records and especially the summer coverage at that time. If you want an indication of where you should go, if needing to see new countryside, then I am sure they will be delighted to show you.

Some regions also have large areas to cover, with few members. Try to give them a helping hand. AGMs at the moment are being planned for localities where the AGM atlas day can make a contribution. Remember, next year we are in Hokitika, so this will be a great opportunity to do Atlasing both coming, going, and during the Conference field day.

Finally, many thanks to all those who have contributed so far, but please make sure that your records are readable. Some people seem to have very weak pencils, which makes it easy for the data entry personnel to make mistakes.

Any questions, requests for instructions or extra observation forms, should be addressed to the ATLAS CONVENORS, P.O. BOX 12397, WELLINGTON.

CHRIS ROBERTSON & GRAEME TAYLOR

Mangawhai Census - November 2001

93 adult New Zealand Dotterels were recorded, as well as twenty young, on an exciting Mangawhai Spit census on 3 November 2001. Many of the adults were on nests. A small colony of 14 pairs of Pied Stilts was located on the island, and two separate Caspian Tern colonies totalling 117 adults and 26 young.

Two pairs of Fairy Terns produced eggs on Labour Weekend (October 22nd), which is the earliest recorded laying ever. An exciting discovery was four adult Black-billed Gulls. These have never been recorded on the Mangawhai summer census before. Is this site going to be their next northern colony? Also recorded were one Red-necked Stint, one Grey-tailed Tattler and two Black-tailed Godwits.

Other interesting waders at Kaipara Harbour roost sites include two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, two Curlew Sandpipers, two Grey-tailed Tattlers, one Mongolian Dotterel, one Far-eastern Curlew, a juvenile Sanderling and 28 Little Terns at Taporā on 20 October. At Papakanui Estuary on 2 November were eight Red-necked Stints, a Sanderling and a Large Sand Dotterel.

Thanks to all observers for their constant reports of sightings, especially Ted Wnorowski and Gillian Vaughan for their particularly sharp observations!

GWENDA PULHAM

Black-fronted Dotterels breeding at Mangere

On 26 November 2000, during the spring census of the Manukau Harbour, Ted Wnorowski and I saw a Black-fronted Dotterel at the Mangere Sewage Ponds. It was on a gravel road beside No. 2 Pond, and the bird's attachment to the area made us wonder if it was breeding. This suggestion was followed up by Ray Clough, who on 28 November again saw a bird at this site, and on 30 November found a nest.

The nest was 0.6 m from the edge of the gravel road and contained three eggs on some sticks and dried grass surrounded by stones. Ray monitored the nest daily. The first chick was seen on 8 December, and all three had hatched by the next day. On 28 December, TW saw one adult and two young near No. 2 Pond. On 19 January 2001 he saw two adult and two juvenile Black-fronted Dotterels feeding on mudflats at the edge of the same pond. The next searches were 25-28 January, when none of these birds were seen.

Black-fronted Dotterels have been observed occasionally around the Auckland region, but these observations seem to be the first breeding record north of Hawkes Bay.

BRIAN GILL

Library News

The Auckland Museum library is now open to the public after being closed for refurbishment for more than a year. This means that the OSNZ library collections are accessible once again.

Public access to the museum library is now through the front of the building via the top floor (military) exhibition galleries, rather than via the museum's administration entrance at the back. The library entrance is reached through a new Pictorial Gallery devoted to changing displays of the library's collection of pictorial and other material. The main feature of the refurbished library is a spacious and comfortable reading room incorporating the same banks of wooden shelving that were a feature of the old reading room. This room contains a large selection of books for browsing - including bird books - as well as the electronic and manual library catalogues. All bags, including handbags, must be left in lockers at the library entrance.

The library hours are currently 1-5 pm Monday to Friday, and society members wishing to consult the OSNZ collection should visit at those times. However, it is planned that these hours will be progressively increased in the future. Although the library is now open, reoccupying the space has been a major exercise and not all stored collections are fully arranged. At present all the OSNZ ornithological serials are accessible but most of the OSNZ books are not. This will be remedied as time permits.

All enquiries about the OSNZ library (except those made in person to museum library staff during opening hours) should be directed to Kathy Barrow, c/o Auckland Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland.

BRIAN GILL & KATHY BARROW



Fiordland in spring

In the second of Southland's 2001 major bird weeks, 11 birders spent a September week on the *Breaksea Girl* sailing from Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound to Bluff, probing other Fiordland sounds on the way. An interesting feature of the trip was that we got into the westernmost squares in New Zealand. The origin for the grid system on the 1:250,000 maps is a line that touches the westernmost points of New Zealand. This honour is shared by Five Fingers Peninsula at the entrance to Dusky Sound, and West Cape, 20 km further south.

The ocean parts of the trip were a contrast to the settled waters of the sounds. You spend several hours fully exposed as you hop between calm fiords. This gives a chance to spot oceanic birds. The commonest of these are Buller's Mollymawks and Cape Pigeons. A few large albatrosses were sighted and a couple of times a Black-browed Mollymawk hove into view. There were a few prions about and Westland Petrels zipping around, as well as several *Pterodroma* petrels that may have been Soft-plumaged Petrels.

The sheltered waters of Doubtful, Breaksea and Dusky Sounds and Preservation Inlet should be a cacophony of bird song. Instead they were almost silent. Distant Bellbirds called, and close in you could pick up the voices of Tomtits, Grey Warblers and Brown Creepers. We saw two pigeons, no Tui, no Fantails, one Weka, one parakeet, two Kaka and heard Kea twice.

The waters provide habitat for odd Black-backed Gulls, and few Pied and Black Shags and Paradise Shelducks. There is a pair of black Variable Oystercatchers every kilometre or so. One oystercatcher

was pied, quite a rarity for Southland. Breaksea Island was a contrast. Sailing close to it we could hear a forest alive with bushbirds and a coastline with plentiful penguins.

We made landings at Supper Cove, the head of Broughton Arm, Cascade Cove, Astronomers Point, where the stumps of trees felled by Cook's crew are still visible, and at Pigeon Island, where Richard Henry kept Kakapo in a ponga enclosure, still there after all these years. In Preservation Inlet we called at the old silver mine, the site of the gold-mining town of Cromarty at Kisbee Bay, and finally at Puysegur Point.

A walk of about 50 minutes takes you to the wind-blasted lighthouse and a different return track leads to the sheltered Sealers Beach with golden sand, pingao, *Euphorbia glauca* and wind-sculpted sandstone cliffs. The last leg to Bluff was a dash around Puysegur Point into a storm which vigorously propelled us east and back home in 12 hours.

The expedition was disappointing in terms of birds, but the scenery was spectacular.

Ironically, although we came to see nature, the most interesting sites were those where humans had once lived. Perhaps this is because nature is winning against humans, whereas elsewhere the silence of the forest, attributable to rats and stoats, is a sign of the negative impact we have had on the natural world.

Thanks to Lance Shaw and Ruth Dalley for making the trip possible. We did 33 squares and got a total of 37 species.

LLOYD ESLER



Participants search for something small and feathered at Cascade Cove.

Some Southern Birds...

In February 2001, we spent eight days birding on a nostalgic visit to Fiordland and Southland.

On a long walk to Key Summit and beyond through upper silver beech, we met Kaka, Brown Creeper, Kea, Redpoll, Tomtit and Rifleman. Yellow-crowned Parakeets were along the bushline, and on alpine tussock (900-1200 m) NZ Pipit, Redpoll and Australasian Harrier.

A White Heron, Variable Oystercatchers and Mallards were feeding in the rain opposite Milford Sound's hotel. In three bright sunny days in the upper Hollyford Valley we saw Paradise Shelduck, and pair of Blue Ducks with a juvenile (where they used to be in the 1980s); in subalpine scrub were Silvereye, Dunnock and Chaffinch,

with Kea and Rock Wren up to 1500 m on Gertrude Saddle. We found Rock Wrens called and bounded out of slabs on hearing a squeaker lure.

A day trip to the Moraine Creek hanging valley started well, with three NZ Robins in the Hollyford Valley, then higher up Kaka, Kea and Yellow-crowned Parakeets. Three Yellowheads (one pair seen, one heard) in silver beech at 470-595 m were the only ones we recorded in Fiordland.

We searched unsuccessfully for Yellowheads in the Eglinton Valley, but a DoC officer later told us that the population had crashed. However robins and parakeets were present, and in the evenings a NZ Falcon appeared, Kaka fluted at dusk and once a Morepork fluttered over the river like a big moth.

At Te Anau Downs 117 NZ Scaup bobbed in the bay

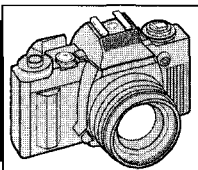
and a Tui sang. On the way through Te Anau we noted 24 species, including five different ducks. Riflemen and Brown Creepers were common in the dry mountain beech through to Moturau Hut (Lake Manapouri).

Riverton Estuary at full tide had a good group of Bar-tailed Godwits – too far off to count – and 124 Turnstones.

We enjoyed the Black Swans and Fernbirds at Awarua Bay East while searching for migrant waders, which were in low numbers: Bar-tailed Godwit 37, Lesser Knot 53, Turnstone 10, Red-necked Stint 14 and Pacific Golden Plover 2.

Catlins Lake area has varied habitats with several shorebirds including Bar-tailed Godwits. On our last day we did the Catlins River walk and were pleased to meet several pairs of Riflemen and a pair of Yellowheads feeding.

KIM & JENNY MORRISON



AGM Photographic Competition

There will be a photographic competition at the 2002 AGM to be held in Hokitika on the 1st & 2nd of June 2002. There will be two categories for entry, with prizes in each category.

35 mm slide

35 mm print

There is a \$5.00 entry fee, which covers as many photos or slides as you wish to submit. Entries are restricted to birds photographed in New Zealand - no overseas photos please.

All entries will be treated with care, but no responsibility can be accepted for lost or damaged entries. All entries will be returned after the competition.

Slide entries will be shown on the evening of the AGM Dinner, and prints will be on display over the weekend.

Prints should be mounted on card with photographer's name and caption displayed at the bottom. Please send your entries, entry fee and full contact details to

STELLA MORTON
1/74 Ravenwood Drive
Forrest Hill
Auckland
morton.pye@xtra.co.nz

Increasing Moulting Record Cards

In the June 2001 issue of *Southern Bird* I urged members to improve on the average return of 100 records a year. As the autumn is the main moulting season for our birds (as far as we know!) now is the time to request the extra cards and forms needed to reach an improved records target.

The returns since my June report are encouraging - already a further 45 records have been received, namely Australasian Gannet (1), Banded Rail (4), Bar-tailed Godwit (4), Blackbird (1), Brown Teal (1), Dunnock (1), Fantail (1), Grey Teal (1), House Sparrow (1), Hutton's

Shearwater (1), Kaka (2), Kingfisher (2), Little Shag (1), Long-tailed Cuckoo (2), Morepork (2), Myna (1), Pukeko (1), Saddleback (2), Spotted Shag (3), Starling (1), Tui (7), Westland Petrel (1), White Heron (1), White-faced Heron (1) and Wrybill (2).

Remember that you can record useful moulting information on birds at any time of year - and potentially from every bird you handle (live or dead). We need more data on many New Zealand species so let's aim for at least 200 new records by June next year! A special thank you to those who have contributed over the past six months, and to David Melville for his encouraging moulting session at the Rotorua AGM.

BEN BELL

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Nominations for Council

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following Council members retire in May 2002, and nominations for a three year term are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created.

Mark Nee (Treasurer)

and three co-opted councillors -

Ros Batcheler
David Melville
David Pye

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 2002, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated. Retiring officers are eligible for re-election.

Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2002 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 2002 in writing and must be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 2002 OSNZ Annual General Meeting will be held in Hokitika on Sunday 2 June 2002.

CHRISTINE REED
Hon. Secretary
P.O. Box 12397
Wellington

! PLEASE NOTE !
DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH
ISSUE WILL BE 10 FEBRUARY



Twitchathon 2001

The Cawdymaws

Having missed out on previous twitchathons, the new 20 km radius option was a chance not to be passed up. To operate out of Foxton Beach gave 27 October as the only practicable date and even then needed to accommodate Maureen being on standby, and connecting her laptop to a phone line every 2-3 hours, plus a shopping trip for her elderly father.

At 8.30 we set off for Palmerston North, which being within the 40 km diameter might add a few extra species. The coastal drizzle had become steady rain when we reached Massey and a drive through the University grounds looking for Tui and NZ Pigeon drew a blank. Neither dotterel species could be found on the river banks and only Centennial Lagoon, with Australian Coot, NZ Scaup and Mute Swan, provided birds we wouldn't see at the beach.

Returning with the shopping we eyed every power line for NZ Kingfishers to no avail but found 2 bedraggled Feral Pigeons on Foxton's water tower. The rain stopped after lunch in time for our walk around Lake Omanu with its usual NZ Dabchick and waterfowl plus Little Black Shag and two Royal Spoonbills. Spotless Crakes responded to taped calls but no Fernbirds. The adjacent plantation produced all the expected small passerines except Redpoll. A Pheasant was heard but no California Quail, Shining Cuckoos or Hedge Sparrows and still no kingfisher. A full tide check of the estuary about 7 pm brought the wader score to 7 but the Pacific Golden Plovers failed to show.

Starting at 7 am on 28th squeezed in an extra two hours first to check the sea, which was too calm for shearwaters, just a welcome party of Australasian Gannets. Then a last look at the estuary, but still no golden plovers.

A full time score of 47 was fewer than hoped for but reflected the adverse weather, neap tides and flat sea. At least it left room for improvement next time.

Finding a team name proved equally difficult with childhood nick-names ruling out puns such as Moorhen. Eventually John Clare, the 19th century naturalist/poet came to our rescue with 'cawdymaw', an old fenland name for a small gull. It sounds well despite the spelling and as used by Clare in his poem 'The Rawk o' the Autumn' evokes memories of birding in the fens in more youthful times. The first four lines, where a 'rawk' is a mist and 'swiver' means to hover, reads: 'The rawk o' the autumn hangs over the woodlands, Like smoke from the city dismembered and pale. The sun without beams burns dim o'er the floodlands, Where white cawdymaws slow swiver and sail.'

JIM MOORE

Mum and Dad's Day Out

Mum and Dad's Day Out (aka Abby Smith and Hamish Spencer) dropped off the children at school early on Thursday 18 October. They then headed up Dunedin's Leith Valley to the Ross Creek Reservoir, to spot some bush birds. Fortune favoured the beginning: Abby spotted both a Tui and a Bellbird before entering the reserve, so they did not have to stop and listen to every honeyeater's song in the bush, trying to find the elusive (in Dunedin) Tui. As they did last year, they walked around the reservoir, looking and listening. Unlike last year, they soon found a pair of Riflemen: wonderful, although only Hamish could hear them. Although they were eagerly looking out for a Tomtit, one was not to be seen, but Fantail, Kereru, Redpoll, Goldfinch and other European

birds were. Just Mallards and a Little Shag were on the water, with Welcome Swallows swooping above it.

No time to waste: a quick drive over Flagstaff provided a few countryside birds (Magpies, Spur-winged Plovers). They stopped at the top of the road for a listen and an optimistic look for a NZ Falcon, but no luck. The trip down to Whare Flat was more productive: Yellowhammers, Tomtits (at last!) and, right where it should be, an Eastern Rosella in a group of gum trees. Whare Flat is a good place for Brown Creepers, but none were to be seen or heard. They did hear a Shining Cuckoo, however, and now there were few bush birds left to list. The value of driving very slowly was proved when they heard those secretive Brown Creepers (which they finally saw after 10 long minutes of neck craning). It is a good thing this road is not well travelled by others!

They were soon back in farmland, and though they couldn't find any Cattle Egrets or a lone White Heron while driving all around the Taieri Plain, they did spot Feral Pigeon, Pukeko, a pair of Shovelers and the last finch of the day, a Greenfinch. Lunch was at the Sinclair Wetlands, behind Lakes Waiholo and Waipori, where they added Skylark and two more ducks: Grey Teal and NZ Scaup. Hundreds of Black Swans and one Kingfisher were on Lake Waiholo itself, but all the shags were Little.

Next, it was over the hill to the coast at Taieri Mouth, where the wetlands revealed a lone Silvereye (this omission was getting embarrassing!) but not the hoped-for Fernbird. Both oystercatchers and White-fronted Tern were ticked off, before they saw a group of Royal Spoonbills at Kaikorai Estuary. The longish drive to Aramoana was next and right away they spotted two other birders (George Chance and Dave York), not to mention a Caspian Tern and a flock of godwits, but not a single Banded Dotterel. A stroll along the mole provided Spotted and Stewart Island Shags, Royal Albatross and Sooty Shearwater, but none of the more unusual seabirds of last year (Southern Giant Petrel had been the best).

The next drive was over the hill and north to Waikouaiti for a dinner of some excellent fish and chips, not to mention the listing of two geese: Canada and Feral (including a mixed pair with 5 goslings!). A diversion to Karitane to find Black Shag and Banded Dotterel was unsuccessful, but a plus was a single Black-billed Gull amongst the Red-bills. Back to Dunedin to pick up the children from friends at 8 p.m., with a lucky Black Shag at Tomahawk Lagoon the last bird of the day.

A little more time would have provided two penguins, but those Banded Dotterels have been missed two years in a row. A good place for Pipit would also be welcome. What a great day!

ABBY SMITH & HAMISH SPENCER

The Winning Team...

For the last two years we have come second, to the "Plains Wanderers" from Christchurch - this year we really wanted to give them a run for their money.

Anyway, Sav and I had put considerable thought into planning this year's event, and decided that the only way we were going to win was by doing a pelagic trip, and leaving the event till the last weekend in October, in the hope of picking up a few more waders. So, we set out from Feilding on Friday afternoon and headed down to Wellington, catching the ferry across Cook Strait, with the aim of starting the clock mid-morning on Saturday. The trip across the strait yielded good numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Westland Petrels, Fairy Prions and Fluttering Shearwaters, so we were hopeful of seeing them on the return trip when



the race would actually be underway. We hired a car and drove down to Kaikoura that night.

The following morning we did a little recce around the Kaikoura Peninsula, managing to locate a Wandering Tattler (my first in NZ) and a few other birds (Reef Heron, Turnstones, shags), hoping they would still be there later. Thousands of Hutton's Shearwaters could be seen streaming past offshore. We then headed up into an area of bush nearby and started the clock at 11.00 am - after seeing Brown Creeper, NZ Robin and NZ Pigeon.

We picked up a few of the more common farmland birds - Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Redpoll, Starling, etc and also managed to see Californian Quail as we headed back to the coast. Of course the tattler had disappeared, but we managed to see the Reef Heron again, along with the Turnstones, shags, and the Hutton's were still streaming past. We then headed out on an Oceanwings pelagic trip (if you haven't heard about this one then check out <http://www.oceanwings.co.nz>).

We picked up a large raft of Hutton's and managed to get excellent views and a few photos. Heading on from here we suddenly saw a large penguin on the surface and actually went past as we were going pretty fast. We quickly turned around and managed to get great views of it not more than 20 m away and quickly realised it was a Yellow-eyed Penguin - the first recorded on an Oceanwings pelagic and a bird well out of its normal range. Heading out further we pulled up beside a fishing boat and easily ticked off Westland Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Northern Giant Petrel, and Salvin's Mollymawk. We moved on out a bit further and started throwing out a bit of burley (shark livers) ending up with quite a few Cape Petrels, Westland Petrels, and Black-backed Gulls around the boat. We were carefully checking the Westlands for any White-chinneds, some of which had been seen on recent trips. Also the Sooty Shearwaters were checked carefully to make sure there were no Short-taileds, again having been seen recently. Several Grey-faced Petrels made an appearance and surprised us by feeding at the back of the boat - one of them lacked the 'pale-face' and we suspect may have been a *P. macroptera macroptera*? A pale phase Southern Giant Petrel did several passes - my first pale phase in NZ - a truly spectacular bird, and a Wandering Albatross also put in an appearance.

We then headed back towards the coast, spotting a distant group of dusky dolphins and saw Spotted Shag and NZ fur seals on the rocks. We docked around 3.30 pm and then headed up to Picton to catch the ferry back across Cook Strait. On the way we ticked off Grey Duck and then on the ferry crossing (having made it to the terminal with about one minute to spare!) managed to see Blue Penguin and Common Diving Petrel and got great views of Fluttering Shearwaters and Fairy Prions - checking them all for anything looking different, but with no success. Nothing else of note, and, surprisingly, no mollymawks.

It was dark as we arrived at Wellington and we headed straight back up to Feilding, stopping at a small patch of bush to listen for and tick off Morepork in light rain. After a few hours sleep up at 5.15 am to light rain and off to the Pohangina Valley nearby to see Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Eastern Rosella. Also got Tui and pheasant, then headed towards Palmerston North, getting a Black-fronted Dotterel at the Manawatu River and then Mute Swan, coot, and NZ Scaup at an urban lake.

We then headed out to the Manawatu Estuary and quickly ticked off godwit, knot, Wrybill and luckily the first Curlew Sandpiper of the season had arrived - something we hadn't really counted on. By this stage we were nearing 84, which is the total the Plains Wanderers had achieved and so we were starting to feel a little more

confident. A quick visit to a local lake saw a couple of surprises added, with Fernbird being heard in a small patch of swamp, and we managed to call up a Spotless Crake with a tape. Little Black Shag was also added before our last stop of the trip, a patch of bush in the Tararua Ranges. Here we managed to get Tomtit and Whitehead, bringing our total to a triumphant 87 species.

So after travelling well over 1,000 km by car and boat we managed a grand total of 87 species. This may not seem a lot by comparison with overseas tallies, but as anyone who has birded in New Zealand knows, this is a pretty respectable total. To put it into perspective, after 15+ years of birding in New Zealand, my NZ list stands at 159, so we saw over half of my list in 24 hours!

Anyway, yet again we had a lot of fun participating in this event, and saw a lot of countryside and some pretty nice birds. Now all we have to do is start planning next years event.....especially how to add all those species that we might have reasonably expected to see - Royal Spoonbill, Pacific Golden Plover, NZ Pipit, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Arctic Skua etc etc. We believe that a total of 100 would not be out of the question with a little luck.

BRENT STEPHENSON

...and the Rest

Eleven teams from around the country - compared with 16 in 2000 - entered this year's National Twitchathon competition (run during the month of October). The results were variable in terms of species tallied, but consistent in at least one respect - everyone thoroughly enjoyed it! If you are one of those that have not had a go at a twitchathon, give it some thought and have a bash next year: no-one said that birding had to be serious all the time, and this is certainly a rather flippant, fun experience, almost a sport (at least as much as Synchronised Swimming!?).

The total number of species recorded is a pretty creditable one of 136 compared with last year's total of 128 and was helped in a big way by the "Questing Quattro" team who visited Tiritiri Matangi Island to boost the rare endemic species significantly. Endemic species are important because a conservation donation is made for every species seen worldwide, so the more New Zealand endemics, the better. That fact makes it a little sad that there are so many gaps in the list - only one kiwi species, no falcon, and several others that we might have added.

One or two species in the individual totals were of rather dubious origin, or debatable taxonomic status, but in the end none of this effected the outcome of the competition. I'm quite grateful that that was the case, though as organiser, and sole judge and arbiter, I was always quite sure who the overall winners were going to be!

Prizes had been donated as follows:

Oceanwings (Dennis Buurman): 2 free adult passes for the Oceanwings Pelagic Birdwatching trip, for the team which scored the most species without the aid of a boat.

David Medway: A copy of his excellent shorebird book for the team with the most species within a 20 km radius.

Don Hadden: A copy of his *Birds of NZ* CD ROM for the best team that included school-age members.

Many, many thanks for those generous donations.

Unfortunately no team claimed to include any members under 18, so using the power vested in myself, by myself of course, I have awarded that prize to the lowest scoring team as an encouragement to anyone who might have thought that their efforts were in some way

not good enough – but let us please try to get some junior members involved next year.

Team scores were as follows:

Team	Recorder	Score
True Blue Duck Hunters	Judith Tyler	47
Peggy and Sue	Peggy Mallalieu	50
Plains Wanderers	Nick Allen	84
Fare Return	Gwenda Pulham	69
Questing Quattros	Gillian Eller	72
Mum & Dad's Day Out	Hamish Spencer	54
Kath's Spysers	Peg Perrott	45
Tim's Spotters	Rita Cox	30
Cawdymaws	Jim Moore	48
Beejay Twitters	Bev Alexander	62
Brent & Sav	Brent Stephenson	87

So the prizes go to: No Boat – Fare Return. 20 km or less – Cawdymaws. Lowest Score – Tim's Spotters, and the magnificent Mantelpiece Monstrosity – Brent & Sav (there wasn't really ever any doubt....)

Thanks to everyone involved. Next time I think we might try getting teams to arrange sponsorship for their efforts with the proceeds going to some worthy cause – as they do in Australia – maybe the Brent & Sav Fuel Fund?

SAV SAVILLE

Rare birds in CSN

OSNZ Council wants to ensure that all members follow the rare or unusual bird reporting rules to improve the reliability of CSN records published in *Notornis*. At its October meeting in Lower Hutt, Council decided that no records of species on the list of reportable rare or unusual birds that is current on 30 June in each year, are to be included in *any* form in Classified Summarised Notes unless those records have been accepted by the Rare Birds Committee. This is to apply from the CSN year starting on 1 July 2001. This note has been sent to all Regional Representatives, Regional Recorders, and CSN compilers and editors.

Council's decision obviously means, among other things, that records of species on the list from 1 July 2001 will be either in or out of CSN depending on whether or not they have been accepted by the RBC. Ideally, Regional Recorders will ensure that they do not include records of species on the current list in their CSN unless the records have been accepted by the RBC. This should in turn make life easier for those who compile the records for annual publication.

Council's decision is in no way a criticism of the excellent work done by present and past compilers of CSN. Its intention is, as mentioned, to ensure that all members follow the reporting rules so that the records published in *Notornis* are reliable.

DAVID MEDWAY
President

Off-road Vehicle Damage

Forest and Bird has approached OSNZ for information on areas where off-road vehicles are impacting bird breeding areas. Forest and Bird is particularly interested in hearing about areas where off road vehicles are having an impact on ground nesting coastal or riverbed species. If you have information, please send details (including location, contact details of recorder, severity of impact, species affected) to Forest and Bird (attn Sarah Gibbs), PO Box 106-085, Downtown, Auckland; fax (09) 303-3514; email office@ak.forest-bird.org.nz. Photos demonstrating impacts would also be appreciated and returned on request.

SARAH GIBBS

OSNZ records in your custody?

Our Society has undertaken numerous studies of birds during the last 61 years, but the raw data and reports from many of those studies have not been collated and published in *Notornis*, *OSNZ News* or *Southern Bird*. The information from those projects is OSNZ's most valuable asset.

It can help us document changes in the abundance and distribution of various New Zealand birds, it can provide information on their biology and much of these accumulated data could provide resource planners and conservation managers with information they need to protect birds or bird habitats. Some planners would pay OSNZ for the use of our data, thus allowing the Society to play an even more important role in bird study and conservation.

Data that are sitting in cardboard boxes, under beds, or in garages will help neither the birds nor those studying them. One of the Scientific Committee's long-term objectives is to archive all Society records in a single location and to create an electronic copy of all data. These data would be available to Society members (free or at cost) and to planners and managers (at a cost-plus basis).

As a first step to achieving this we need to locate the whereabouts of all OSNZ records including raw data. If you were once a regional representative, regional recorder or the convenor of a national or regional scheme or project, or have in your possession any other Society records can you please do the following;

- Tell me what data, unpublished reports or records you have in your possession.
- If you passed any such records on to someone else, tell me who may now have them.
- Carefully sort these records, label them as OSNZ records and store them in a safe place until Council can find a suitable location to archive all such records. Please don't give them to me.

Current RRs, recorders and scheme convenors need not provide this information.

Thanks very much.

KERRY-JAYNE WILSON
Convenor, OSNZ Scientific Committee,
Ecology and Entomology Group,
P.O. Box 84,
Lincoln University.
Email Wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz



Donations

Many thanks to all the following people who have made donations to the Society:

Mr & Mrs D.M. Stracey, Dr.P.L.Munns, John Gibb, Stuart Nicholson, Joy Soper, Peter Grant, Emmy Pratt, Jill Hamel, Martin Snowball, W.S.Thompson, M.& S. Graham, Dr.Michael Taylor, Mary & Jonathan Mason, Paul & Joy Sagar, Betty Seddon, David & Stella Pye, Colin Hill, W.L.J & A.L.Ringer, Gill Eller, Audrey Eagle, Mrs. G. Norman, Barry Friend, Barry Hartley, Peter Howden, Dr Michael Fitzgerald, Geoff de Lisle, Dr K.D.B. Thompson

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary.

Fairy Terns Return?

In autumn of each year, the bulk of the population of New Zealand Fairy Terns congregates on the southern Kaipara Harbour. By monitoring their roost sites in this harbour in April and May we can determine the survival of both adults and juveniles and therefore make an assessment of the current population.

Since 1992, all known chicks have been individually colour banded by DoC staff just prior to fledging. So, apart from four fairly senior birds, we now have a totally identifiable population.

During late autumn 2001, OSNZ observers at south Kaipara roost sites recorded all 13 breeding adults from the previous breeding season and 17 of the 21 chicks fledged in the last four summers. 13 breeding adults is not evenly divisible – the reason was that there were three adult birds only at the Papakanui breeding site, two female and one male. Both females nested, and both nests contained fertile eggs.

The 17 young birds sighted accounted for 100% of birds under two years of age and 60% of two and three year olds, indicating a good survival rate of fledged chicks. Fairy Terns are capable of breeding successfully at three years and often attempt to breed at two years, so if the above survival rates continue, then lack of available recruits can be discounted as a factor capping the expansion of the breeding population.

My thanks to the team of Gordon Gorbey, Mike Twyman, Gavin Grant and Darryl Jeffries for their assistance and their persistence in the monitoring of the species. Over a three hour high tide period one day, some 19 individuals were recorded, and 2 on another occasions. We assess the current population of New Zealand Fairy Terns to be 29 birds minimum.

GWENDA PULHAM



A significant proportion of the New Zealand Fairy Tern population at roost.

Photo: James Colville

Postgraduate students in Ornithology in New Zealand Universities: 2001

University of Auckland

1. School of Biology

Contact: Dr Dianne Brunton

<d.brunton@auckland.ac.nz>

Xiao Ling Li. Acoustic behaviour of male and female Bellbirds. MSc

Kevin Parker. 1) Fernbird reproductive success on mainland sites: comparing habitats. 2) Avian disease levels of native species on offshore islands. MSc.

Paul Barnett. The impacts of ecotourism on nesting gannets. PhD.

Emma Marks. The role of acoustic communication in parent-offspring interactions for creching penguins. PhD.

Michael Anderson. Shorebird/invertebrate interaction at Miranda. MSc.

Duncan Emerson. Using individual/gender difference in song to census Kokako. MSc.

Jill Bolland. Oystercatcher and godwit interactions on wintering grounds. PhD.

Alice Convey. Comparing the complexity of Tui song in different acoustic environments. Summer student.

Darryl Jeffries. Impact of hedgehogs on shorebirds' nesting success and duneland invertebrates. PhD.

Topics in planning stage:

1) The evolution of Saddleback dialects.

2) Testing parental investment and sexual selection theories using a Zebra Finch model.

3) Warbler breeding success in urban and semi-urban environments.

2. School of Environmental and Marine Sciences,

Tamaki Campus. Contact: Dr Mick Clout

<m.clout@auckland.ac.nz>

Rosemary Barraclough. Ecosystem benefits of Te Urewera mainland island. PhD.

Heidi Stevens. Native birds in forest remnants. PhD.

Stephanie May. Foraging behaviour of NZ pigeons in a fragmented landscape. PhD.

James Russell. Modelling of introduced vertebrates on NZ offshore islands. MSc.

Melissa Farrimond. Post-fledging behaviour of juvenile Kakapo. MSc.

David Pattemore. Establishment and dispersal of translocated NI Robins. MSc.

University of Waikato

Department of Biological Sciences

Contact: Dr. Joseph R. Waas

Ph: (07) 838 4286, fax (07) 838 4324

<j.waas@waikato.ac.nz>

Laura Molles. Dialect function in North Island Kokako. Post doctoral.

Tim Day. Manipulating pest control baits to reduce poisoning of non-target birds and invertebrates. PhD.

Masamine Miyazaki. Female mate choice in little blue penguins and its influence on reproductive success. PhD.

Dai Morgan. Behavioural interactions between Australian Magpie and other birds in New Zealand. PhD.

Shinichi Nakagawa. Effects of visual and auditory

stimuli on the egg-laying schedule and clutch size of Zebra Finches. PhD.

Maggie Collinson. Observational learning in New Zealand parrots. MSc.

TBA. The influence of human activities and structures on the behaviour and ecology of NZ Dabchick.

Massey University

Institute of Natural Resources

Contact: Dr Murray Potter

<M.Potter@massey.ac.nz>

<<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~MPotter/>>

Ph (06) 350 5799 ext. 2608

Ellen Bennett. Hormonal stimulation of breeding in birds. PhD.

Wei-Hang Chua. Corticosterone and stress in quail. PhD.

Sharon Henare. Hormonal stimulation of breeding in birds. PhD.

Matthew Low. The evolution of rape in Hihi. PhD.

Brent Stephenson. Population changes of the Australasian Gannet in New Zealand. PhD.

Wendy Dimond. Cost to the source population of translocations of North Island Robins. MSc.

Anna Grant. Behaviour of captive reared kiwi before and after release into the wild. MSc.

Myfanwy Hill. Reproduction and survival of Kereru in Whirinaki. MSc.

Emma Hawke. Faecal steroids in Kakapo. MSc.

Paul Horton. The effects of predator removal on kiwi breeding success. MSc.

Cindy Jenkins. Determining the olfaction ability of northern brown kiwi. MSc.

Lisa MacKenzie. Impact of wind farms on birds and bats. MSc.

Niccy Pindur. Nutrient requirements for maintenance in kiwi. MSc.

Liz Raeburn. Translocation of robins. MSc.

Liz Saafi. Ecology and conservation of the Red Shining Parrot in Tonga. MSc.

Matt Wong. Territory and breeding in the Australasian Harrier. MSc.

Victoria University of Wellington.

School of Biological Sciences

(04) 463 - 5570.

Contact Staff member: Dr Ben D. Bell.

<Ben.Bell@vuw.ac.nz>

Andrew Styche. Distribution and behavioural ecology of the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. PhD.

Leigh Bull. Intra-specific size variation within the shearwater genus *Puffinus* in relation to sex and geographic range. PhD.

Stephanie Rowe. Song dialects in Saddleback and Kokako on Kapiti Island in relation to area of origin and settlement. MSc.

Hayley Meehan. Seed dispersal by pigeons in Tonga. MSc

Ben Wiles. North Island robin in a restoration landscape on Mana Island. MSc.

Stephanie Hicks. Settlement patterns of Bellbirds and Whiteheads translocated from Kapiti Island to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. MSc.

Emily King. Settlement patterns of Yellowheads (Mohua) translocated to Inner Chetwode Island (Nukuiwaiata). M.Con.Sci.

Delia Small. Survival and productivity of North Island robins translocated from Kapiti Island into Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. MSc.



University of Canterbury

Department of Zoology, (03) 366 7001

Contact: Dr Jim Briskie

<j.briskie@zool.canterbury.ac.nz>

Kathryn Atkinson. Evolution of plumage polymorphism in birds. PhD.

Craig Barnett. Food limitation and its effects on bird behaviour. MSc.

Myles Mackintosh. Inbreeding depression, food limitation and the causes of high hatching failure in New Zealand Robins. MSc.

Lincoln University

Ecology and Entomology Group

Contact: Dr Kerry-Jayne Wilson

Phone (03) 325 2811 ext 8379.

<Wilsok@tui.lincoln.ac.nz>

Jon Banks, PhD. Coevolution of penguins and their chewing lice

Frances Schmechel, PhD. Aspects of habitat selection, population dynamics, and breeding biology in the endangered Chatham Island Oystercatcher.

Clare Washington, PhD. Birds and roads: Examining the permeability of roads in a fragmented landscape.

Valerie Saxton, PhD. Bird behaviour and fruit selection in vineyards.

Stefan Thomsen, PhD. Ecology of skylarks.

Benoit Gangloff, MSc. Meal size and feeding frequency for Pycroft's Petrel chicks.

Julie Walsh, MSc. Seasonal habitat use by Kakapo on Maud Island.

Lynne Sheldon-Sayer, MSc. Plant communities and their use by Kakapo on Maud Island.

Pauline Williamson, MSc. Evaluation of predator control programmes for the protection of White-flipped Penguins on Banks Peninsula.

Jennie Lyall, MSc. Ecology of Kereru in fragmented habitats in the Lyttelton Harbour basin.

Pete McClelland, M.Appl. Sc. The survival, dispersal

and ecology of Campbell Island Teal recently released on Codfish Island.

Dai Morgan, MSc. Comparative breeding of South Island Pied Oystercatchers on river terraces and surrounding farmland in mid-Canterbury.

Tina Troup, M.Appl.Sc. Foraging of breeding Royal Albatrosses on Campbell Island

Rhonda Pearce, MSc. Which factors underlie present day bird distributions.

Shelley Morgan, M.Appl.Sc. Cat movements and prey selection in an urban wetland remnant.

Jane Tansell, BSc.Hons. Pair choice in Black Stilts: do pairs avoid inbreeding?

Supervisors, Adrian Paterson, Kerry-Jayne Wilson and Graham Hickling.

University of Otago

Department of Zoology,

Contact: Dr Lloyd S. Davis,

Ph: (03) 479 7654 Fax: (03) 479 7584

<adelie@stonebow.otago.ac.nz>

David Latham. Spatial and seasonal variation in infections of crabs by acanthocephalan parasites (incl. correlations with abundance of shorebirds, the definitive hosts of the parasites, at the study sites around Otago). MSc.

Simon MacDonald. Avian malaria in Yellow-eyed Penguins. MSc.

Scott Hooson. Reproductive success of translocated South Island Saddlebacks

in three different habitat types. MSc.

Nisha Chalam. The metabolic cost of chick rearing in Blue Penguins. BSc Hons.

Alvin Setiawan. Reproductive endocrinology and social stimulation of Yellow-eyed Penguins. PhD.

Melanie Massaro. Egg production, brood patch development and brood reduction in Yellow-eyed and crested penguins. PhD.

COMPILED BY EC YOUNG

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Rook Crook

On the 8 October 2001, Liz Wang and I spotted a large black bird sitting menacingly on a fence post near the Miranda-Waitakaruru highway. On closer inspection the bird was a Rook, not uncommon for this area. The bird promptly flew low over a nearby paddock and alighted near rough pasture.

As we ticked "Rough Pasture" on our atlas sheet, it then sauntered over to what looked like a patch of dried hay. The bird thrashed its beak around a bit, with detritus flying in all directions. It was then I saw a Spur-winged Plover watching from a reasonable distance, agitated in appearance. It was running forward, realising the Rook was quite large, then running back, uttering shrill 'prap' calls.

Judging what the Rook may be doing, Liz and I returned our binoculars to the scene of the crime. It was difficult to tell, but we presume the Spur-winged Plover's nest was at the egg stage, as the Rook was rifling through the nest with the precision of a forensic scientist. It would have found the chicks quite quickly and flown off, in other words!

The morbid corvid was still at it when we decided to

move on, to avoid becoming road statistics, ten minutes later. The bird must have made an impression on Liz, as a few weeks later she told me excitedly about Rooks flying over the Waikato River. (A UBR has been undertaken for these birds).

PAUL CUMING

New Members

Joining our ranks as new members are:

Mark Ellis, Wim Houtman, Ian Armitage, Richard Bacon, Diana Robertson, Denise & Terry Knight, Susan Marks, Raewyn Hughes, John Cheyne (rejoined after a few years absence). A warm welcome to you all.

HAZEL HARTY

Membership Secretary



REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Northland

Have you ever heard of a show and tell story quite like this? At the October evening meeting, Lorna Simpkin dons surgical gloves and plunges her arm into a plastic bag and pulls out – no, not a white rabbit – a dead kingfisher with two back legs and the tail of an equally dead mouse protruding from its beak. It was found dead on the back lawn.

At the same meeting Gerry Brackenbury gave us an update on a few happenings on Limestone / Matakohe Island. He has seen evidence of Grey Warblers breeding there. The two released kiwi, one male, one female, are doing well. They were weighed weekly, fortnightly, then monthly. It is hoped that six more juveniles will be released there in November. Stoats sometimes turn up in December by swimming over, which is a worry to those monitoring the island.

Tony Beauchamp spoke of the decline in House Sparrow numbers in the area, mainly through the disease which has been wiping out large numbers in other areas. Richard Parrish spoke of the abundance of Tui around the suburb of Onerahi, often ten at a time in his backyard. There must be plenty of food around.

Katrina Hansen, who monitors Fairy Terns throughout their breeding season, had a sad story to tell. The awful weather recently has washed out the nests on the Waipu Spit. Hopefully they will nest again. The nest on Mangawhai Spit had two eggs in it, so here's hoping that these hatch and fledge.

The speaker at the September meeting was local member Ray Pierce who is monitoring the unusual Tuamotu Sandpiper. The 76 low atolls which make up the Tuamotus, near Tahiti, the Cook Islands and Pitcairn, are spread over a vast area of ocean. The Tuamotu Sandpiper is abundant on predator-free islands, as are quite a few other birds. Most however have predators such as cats, rats and crabs. It is hoped to put in place eventually – an eradication programme for other islands.

At the November meeting, Richard Parrish spoke on the birds of Upolu and Savaii in Western Samoa. Richard was based in Apia, where the temperature was in the range of 28°-34° regularly, monitoring birds present before and after eradication of predators. He has also conducted surveys of lizards and snails which are his speciality. He was lucky enough to go up Mt Via, just out of Apia, and said it was a very good place to see a variety of local birds. In all we saw 28 species on and around the islands in Richard's colourful slides.

David Crockett has just returned from the Chathams where he is involved in the Taiko recovery project. He was pleased that the team had found 16 new Taiko. Two other birds they found had been banded in 1982.

The Northland OSNZ 2001 year will end with a social evening, probably in the first week of December. Happy Christmas to all other regions, and all of the busy people who produce *Southern Bird*.

(JANET SNELL)

Auckland

Our September meeting was something a little different: geology professor Jack Grant-Mackie described his fascinating studies of bird bones and fossil records. This work has revealed a wealth of information on New Zealand's avifauna. It was featured recently in a science series made for Danish television. We enjoyed seeing the video presentation, complete with its original commentary, played quietly, while our speaker added a carefully-timed voice-over for our benefit in English!

October's speaker was Tony Mansfield. He showed a large collection of his slides on the topic of birds of the central African floodplains. Tony lived in Zambia for seven years and birded around there and the neighbouring countries. Most of his slides were from Kafue River, a tributary of the Zambezi. During the dry season the river can be as little as 30 metres wide, and during the rainy season up to 300 km wide, covering an area about half the size of the South Island. The colour and variety of birds was truly amazing, although many of the waders looked distinctly similar to the relatives we see here in New Zealand. Tony noted that the area was a twitcher's paradise; it is not uncommon to see over 200 different species in half a day without really trying. On the down side, insects, malaria, large dangerous animals and young teenagers with automatic weapons do cause limitations to the bird-watching experience.

In November we returned to a local subject when Chris Barfoot spoke on the development of Tahuna Torea Nature Reserve on the Tamaki Estuary. In the early 1970s the land was destined to become a dumping ground. Local resident Ronald Lockley had other ideas. The reserve today is testimony to the hours of campaigning and hard work they and many local volunteers put in. It contains a significant remnant of coastal forest, plus open grassy areas, ponds and fish traps. The lagoon and sandspit provide important wader roosts, for which OSNZ records have been kept for some years.

Spring field trips have included Hauraki Gulf island surveys of Motutapu and Motuora, coordinated and led by Mike and Sharen Graham, and bird counts in two of the region's major parks - Tawharanui Peninsula and Hunua Ranges. The count at Tawharanui completes a three-year baseline study before the Auckland Regional Council begins predator control, with the aim of making the area a mainland island. The Hunua Ranges operation on 22 September was conducted in cool and misty conditions, despite which a team led by Tim Lovegrove covered 10 stations along 2 km of the Kohukohunui Track. Some 15 forest species were recorded, notably Kokako, Tomtit and NZ Robin, the robins having been introduced to the management area this year.

Seasonal reports and recent sightings from the Auckland area include the return of Shining Cuckoos, and 35 Royal Spoonbills on the Kaipara. The transfer of Fernbirds to Tiritiri Matangi is complete and Kevin Parker would be grateful for any news of these birds on the island (which can be communicated via the RR).

(MICHAEL TAYLOR & CHRIS THOMPSON)

South Auckland

Spring has arrived in South Auckland, with the return of the Arctic waders from the north. The Miranda Naturalists' Trust at their spring migration day during October had, as a guest speaker, Dr Theunis Piersma from Holland. He arrived at the same time as the birds and believed that he witnessed the actual arrival of knots at Porengarenga Harbour in the north. During his address to the Trust he described the breeding behaviour of Red Knots and also some of the physical changes their body goes through preparing for and recovering from the long migration flights.

The summer census of the Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour were relatively fine days, with only one heavy shower on the Firth of Thames. The president of the Society, David Medway, was present during the count of the Manukau Harbour to make sure that there were no birds present that required unusual bird sighting forms to be completed. The only likely candidate was a suspected Broad-billed Sandpiper that disappeared before it was clearly seen, saving the necessity for completing the paperwork.

There has been a series of very interesting speakers at the regional meeting covering a wide range of topics. The August meeting saw Tony Habraken describing his journey to the Korean coastline checking on the movement of the migratory wading birds moving north in early May this year. Duncan Poyser who had been in New Zealand for most of this year gave an illustrated talk on the birds of the United Kingdom at the September meeting. Duncan's family was in New Zealand at that time and were returning to the UK on the 12 September so had a disrupted trip home.

In October Nigel Adams continued his series on bird studies in foreign parts of the world. This time he described his experiences in Israel, trying to determine how small migratory birds manage where water is very scarce. This was a good example of how a very scientific subject was covered to make it understandable to non-scientific members.

Unfortunately the run of informative speakers was broken in November when David Lawrie bored the largest crowd of the year with his slides of his trip to the Galapagos Islands. By the end of the evening everyone was sick of the sight of slides of boobies, frigatebirds and Darwin finches.

On the bird front there has been a number of unusual sightings in the local area. Further to the previous reports relating to the Black Kite it, or another one, was recently seen over the Mangere sewage ponds, heading over the airport, and then along the eastern shores of the Manukau Harbour heading south. This may be the same bird that has been previously seen several times over the lower Waikato wetlands but is causing some frustration because of the inconsistency of its sightings.

It would appear that a good range of the usual small sandpipers along with Whimbrel and Far-eastern Curlew are present on the south shore of the Manukau Harbour. There is also a reasonably good range of species at Miranda which are relatively easily viewed in the ponds adjacent to the road. The recent highlight however was the sighting on 19 November of a male Ruff in that pond adjacent to the road. Those of us who unfortunately work at least some of the week are hoping that it stays for at least a few days.

The beach patrollers have had rather good returns lately, with the possible finding of several Wedge-tailed Shearwaters still being investigated.

The Black-billed Gull colony commenced laying at Miranda only to be predated a week later. They are also investigating a further site at the mouth of the Waihou River in the Firth of Thames and have started laying on the Seagrove shellbanks on the South Manukau Harbour. We are hopeful therefore that there will be some success to enable the continuation of the long term banding programme.

(DAVID LAWRIE)



Waikato

Those who tasted Jeff Hudson's delectable demeanor at the Rotorua Conference were in for a treat when Jeff presented a revised and expanded evening talk on Kokako dialect differences in Te Urewera National Park. The September talk spoke of the trials and tribulations of trying to get pairs of mismatched birds to breed, using taped calls. These were only part of an enthusiastic display of Jeff's skills in this field. We thank him for coming from Ohope for the talk.

The talk raised hopes that we would see or hear a Kokako on the September field trip. But, even though we were in an area with around 40 pairs in the Mangatutu Valley, the birds were busy doing something else (that probably didn't need a taped call for!) So we settled for myriads of Tomtits, Robins and Whiteheads. The first Shining Cuckoo of the year was heard here on the 23 October, and noted also were plenty of red admiral butterflies – well, they've got wings too! A Falcon was seen chasing a Keruru.

Many members assembled with extreme numbers of other birdwatchers on 7 October to hear Theunis Piersma talk on Red Knot studies in the Netherlands. The usual suite of waders was present.

A week later a Rook was spotted sneaking down a back road near Whakamaru. We saw it presumably again on the way back from our destination. If in this area, look for Rooks! This was part of a much larger effort over four days to atlas Pureora Forest. A large percentage of the birds seen were native/endemics, so we were chuffed! Highlights included seeing Kaka within 5 metres of us from the Forest Tower, Riflemen heard here and at the cabins and seen at the Bog Inn track, and Kokako at Bismarck Road. Fernbirds were seen at Bog Inn, and at various spots north of the highway, sometimes very close at hand. Species seen here were used for the twitchathon, which netted 40 bird species, with Long-tailed Cuckoo being the only bird species not seen by other teams.

Another long distance speaker in the form of Dave Wills motored up from Whirinaki Forest with assembled goods including transmitters, time-lapse video and giant mist-netting videos. Dave has been tracking Kaka and Keruru in the forest as part of a study to determine the effect of poisons on the bigger forest birds. The usual suspects got in the way of getting sufficient transmitters on to the birds – getting munched, non-fruiting of trees, and fickle breeding. We have admired Dave for his perseverance! It was interesting to see the techniques used for setting up mist nets, and the processing of the birds when caught. Working with such a large and particularly incisive beak such as the Kaka's, it was no wonder that Dave had turned down the sound on the video.

In November David Lawrie entertained us with an impressive suite of slides on the Galapagos Islands, Quito and Mt Cotopaxi. It was armchair travel at its best, with postcard quality reptiles, birds and landscapes. New records for islands and old rediscovered populations of birds were the highlights of the trip.

Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan Harbour censuses have just been completed as I write this. Kawhia had 7 Whimbrels, plus 24 Black-backed Gull nests. Aotea had nesting Caspian Terns, and 1588 godwits. Raglan had 26 Black-backed Gull nests spread around the limestone outcrops edging the water. The smaller harbour of Raglan has been surveyed only relatively recently, but is starting to provide data to interested groups, showing that any data are valuable data.

The Robin Survey conducted on Mt Kakepuku on 20 November garnered six to seven pairs still on the mountain. This is an excellent result, with both banded and unbanded birds seen, with nests found and fledglings seen. Tomtits were also found still breeding.

Recent bird sightings:

- Black Shag, 7 seen, 1 on nest, Pehitawa Kakikatea Forest Reserve, newly covenanted, north of Te Kuiti, 16.10.01
- NZ Falcon, 1 chasing Keruru, Rangitoto Ranges, 23.9.01.
- Kokako, 1 reported by a local farmer, Awaroa Vly, 2000. Pureora Forest, 1 seen, 13.10.01
- Keruru, up to 16 reported on kowhai by farmer, Awaroa Vly during October. 2 seen on Bog Inn track, Pureora, 13.10.01
- Kaka, 4 seen up close by Forest Tower, Pureora Forest 14.10.01
- Dabchick, 2 carrying nesting material under blackberry, Whitehall, near Cambridge, 1.10.01.
- Fernbird, Raepahu Fernbird Reserve, 1 on 12.10.01. Seen clearly in Pureora Northern block and Bog Inn Track, 13-14.10.01
- Rook, 2 seen over Waikato River, early October, inside the city boundary [L Wang]

All sightings bar Rook by AS & J Rowe, solely or with OSNZ Group.

September and October were extremely kind to the birds, as far as beach patrols indicated. In addition to 13 pelagic species, there were seabird bits that could not be identified to species, and 17 non-seabirds. It seems that a representative of just about any species with feathers, whether it is a seabird or not, will eventually finish up as a corpse on a beach somewhere.

Among live birds seen on beach patrols, NZ Dotterels have started nesting in November on two beaches, and two other pairs are thinking about it on a third beach. There have been somewhat unusual sightings of migrant waders, probably recent arrivals still moving about and deciding

where in NZ they are going to spend the summer. There were 5 godwits and 2 knots at Taharoa on 2 October, 5 knots at Kawhia on 4 October, a godwit at Waikorea on 25 October, and a godwit at Taharoa on 1 November

(PAUL CUMING)

Bay of Plenty

The most notable news from the Bay of Plenty is the application for a grant from the local Regional Council's Environmental Enhancement Fund for predator control for NZ Dotterels on private land.

Otherwise we ring in the changing seasons with the comings and goings of the waders and even made an effort to welcome the migrants back this year. Hopefully, we will do better next spring. Malcolm Hutton records "8 Pacific Golden Plovers, so far, a Wrybill, 10 Red Knots. There were two New Zealand Dotterel chicks surviving on 17th October, though it looks as though one didn't because we saw three on the 8th. There were what I thought were eight or nine Whimbrels flying away, but I can't be sure yet. Also I picked up a Westland Petrel on the beach on 8 October, the first I have ever found here. At first I thought it was a Black Petrel but I found eventually it didn't fit this"

The Manawahe Kokako Trust had a Kokako Open Day last month. The Trust operates on private land under the Queen Elizabeth II Trust and it is wonderful to see what a bit of predator control can do for the birds.

Kaka were reported this winter in Omokoroa – "Locals tell us there have been up to 8 there over the spring following the tuis and eating the kowhai" – and Opotiki. Bill and Rachel Sloan have had them in their garden. The Kaka have been around the town in Opotiki as the locals kept calling Bill and Rachel asking them if parrots had escaped from their aviary. Also there have been reports of them in Valley Road in Whakatane.

Elaine Ward reports an Eastern Rosella in her garden in Bethlehem early September. I also saw one in an old yellow flowering gum on the Ohiwa Harbour's edge for several days in August.

A trip to White Island and environs was interesting. We saw a Wandering Albatross, giant petrel species, Cape Petrels, Shy Mollymawk, Fluttering Shearwaters, Grey-faced Petrel, a Blue Penguin, gannets and White-fronted Terns.

Interesting little story from a friend of mine travelling around the harbour a couple of weeks ago. A Pied Stilt stood in the middle of the road as she came along and just shrieked at her. She stopped the car, wondering what it was all about and then another stilt marched across the road with three young in tow!

We also had a bit of drama over Black Stilts at Matahui Point but it turned out they are all dark hybrids. "They will generally look black from a distance but there should be a few white feathers at least around the vent. This could be quite difficult to see unless the bird is facing away while feeding. It is really good to get them positively identified. We now know that they are not birds released from captivity and that is a really important fact for future management decisions regarding captive rearing and release. Thanks to everyone involved. Please continue to send us any future sightings as every scrap of information is valuable and it all adds to the big picture" – Dave Murray, Kaki Recovery.

(NARENA OLLIVER)

Taranaki

Field trips have been well supported with most being directed at areas needing atlas visits. This has taken us to places we have never given much consideration to in the past but have always proved rewarding. A noticeable change in distribution has been the Eastern Rosella population which is steadily making inroads southwards. We have been to all except a couple of our 130 squares and should get to the remainder when the weather improves.

Winter brought fewer than usual seabirds on our beach patrols and those found were mostly commoner species. It may be that with the warmer season the food supply for the subantarctics just didn't come our way. May saw good numbers of Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters passing up the coast on migration, with few being beachcast. A few Shy Albatrosses and giant petrels were seen offshore in blustery conditions.

Another species of which we usually get 20 or so in north Taranaki each winter is the Cattle Egret, but this year only one was seen, though there were 12 further south near Opunake.

Lake Mangamahoe near New Plymouth is an artificial lake storing the city water supply and supplying a power station. Regular visits are made in the hope of seeing the odd rare waterfowl; so far without luck. However it does support the only breeding population of Australian Coot in North Taranaki, with post-breeding counts of up to 17 which is well up on previous years. Some post-breeding dispersal has been noted. Also seen here are New Zealand Dabchicks (uncommon in north Taranaki) and good numbers of New Zealand Scaup.

Rare bird reports have been submitted for Fairy Martins seen by Barry Hartley near Rahotu in September (accepted by RBC) and a possible White-

eyed Duck *Aythya australis* seen by Peter Fryer in November (submitted to RBC).

(BARRY HARTLEY)

Manawatu

The early summer found a Cattle Egret still at the Manawatu Estuary, the only one seen in the region this year – it remained into September. A single Sharp-tailed Sandpiper from 2 September was remarkably early, but soon moved on and at the time of writing (9 November) no others have shown up – and unfortunately this situation is the same for Red-necked Stint, with one in early September and none since.

The Manawatu Estuary has not, however, been devoid of good birds. The first confirmed record of Large Sand Dotterel (aka Greater Sandplover) from anywhere in the south-west of the North Island was there from at least 8–10 October, and the first Terek Sandpiper for 10 years was found on 3 November. Also, there was a Curlew Sandpiper from the end of October onwards.

We had a very successful trip up to the National Park area to see Blue Duck, and also to have a bit of a go at the Twitchathon. The Blue Ducks really performed with one drake sitting and then feeding at a range of about 10 m from our group of observers.

Brent Stephenson and I managed to see most of the local specialities on our Twitchathon day (see elsewhere in this issue) and a real Manawatu highlight was a Fernbird at Lake Omanu.

An offshore fishing trip in mid-September brought some rather interesting birds that are very rarely recorded from the beach – Cape Petrel, Fairy Prion, Common Diving Petrel were all present in reasonable numbers and a single Grey-faced Petrel was also seen.

(SAV SAVILLE)

Wellington

In September one of our most active members, Geoff de Lisle, of Agresearch, talked to gathering at an evening meeting about infectious diseases in wild birds. He told us how the aquatic bird population has all the ingredients of all the influenza viruses! That is all 15 haemagglutinins, which bind the virus to the cell, and all nine types of neuraminidase, which facilitate the spreading of the virus. And new variants of the virus are continually evolving. Birds associating with water (waterfowl), but also seabirds and waders) are the host for this Mildly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

A new variant needs to be transferred through contaminated water, to pigs, chickens or horses, before it will break into the human population in epidemics and pandemics. So duckshooters eating their catch have nothing to worry about. But if you ever needed a reason for washing your hands after handling birds...

More pleasant experiences were shared with us in October, when another of our regulars reported on his 21 day trip around the subantarctic islands, including Macquarie Island and the Chathams. Peter Reese had good views of seven species of penguin, four kinds of shag, various pelagic species such as albatrosses, mollymawks, petrels, shearwaters, prions, and enough different land species to be interesting in their own right (eg. Auckland Island Teal, snipe, Shore Plover and Chatham Island Pigeon). Peter's enthusiastic field-work and excellent slides were received with great pleasure, stimulating great interest in how one manages to visit such regions.

From the subantarctic to the tropics, from penguins to pigeons. Specifically the Pacific Pigeon and its role in seed distribution in the rainforest tree species in Tonga, which was explained by researcher Hayley Meehan at our November meeting. The forest depends for propagation on frugivores (fruit-eating animals). Larger eaters can process larger fruits and may carry the seeds further. The largest species of pigeon has become extinct, mainly as a result of human hunting. This has affected the composition of the shrinking remnants of forest. Hayley's study of the Pacific Pigeon, most numerous of the columbid survivors, casts interesting light on this important issue, though it needs to be matched with the findings of similar research to be done on the seed distribution role of that other frugivore, the flying-fox or fruit-bat.

Springtime has been very busy for volunteers at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, our own members included. The robins transferred last May are nesting. The team has to check fledglings, and also nests near the dates when something is due to happen.

Banding training has continued at the zoo. In October there was a suggestion of population change, starlings being predominant in the nets, and for the first time a total absence of finches.

Thus summer we are fully engaged in meeting commitments to staff a number of bird counts for DoC, all on Kapiti Island. These include the annual survey of the coastal species (November), the final quarterly count of forest birds (January), and, on two consecutive nights in January, February and March, monitoring the numbers of Little Spotted Kiwi.

Brian Bell is holding a session on banding Black-backed Gull chicks at Onoke Spit on 16 December. And for those who can keep up the pace, there will be a visit to the Manawatu Estuary to check the waders on 18 November.

We heard with regret recently the news of the death of one of our long-time members, Kingsley Brown. Kingsley used to attend the annual Conference and will be remembered by some of our older members for his willingness to share his knowledge with people of all ages.

(ROD ORANGE)

Nelson

We benefited very much from the visit of Theunis Piersma and his wife Petra, Netherlands wader experts, who were taken to several shorebird feeding sites around Golden and Tasman Bays. They did a benthic survey in Golden Bay and explained the relevance of their findings to the birds that fed there. We later put in a submission on the Quota Management System for cockle harvesting. We conducted a successful cannon netting in September in the Waimea estuary and banded 97 SIPO.

The OSNZ Council approved funding for Rob Schuckard to attend the Taipei Bird Fair where groups on the Asia/Pacific flyway gave exhibitions from their areas. Rob took with him an excellent display of Farewell Spit which received a lot of interest from the thousands of visitors.

Richard Stocker has begun the next round of banding Rock Wrens and trapping stoats at Lake Henderson in the Kahurangi N.P. Willie Cook went to the Dart Valley to assist DoC with capturing Mohua for relocation on the pest-free Chetwode Islands. 27 birds were caught and will be intensively monitored in their new home. DoC in St Arnaud have asked for volunteer help with Kaka tracking, robin banding and rat trap making projects.

Recently Willie saw eleven golden plovers and a curlew feeding in the Waimea estuary. Henk Heinekamp heard three Long-tailed Cuckoos near his Stoke property, two nearby and one answering from a distance.

Some of us joined North Canterbury members in Blenheim over Labour weekend for atlasing. During a visit to the Wairau river mouth we were interested to find the spoonbill colony widely dispersed using a number of different islands for nesting. Some pairs had built nests a metre or so high above ground level. The most unexpected find of the weekend was a NZ Dabchick on Lake Taylor.

Nelson and Tasman District Councils are holding an Ecofest over two weeks during which environmental groups can organise activities around their particular interest. David Melville has arranged for our branch to run a field trip in conjunction with Nelson/Marlborough Fish & Game to look at the Waimea Estuary. 40 people have signed on for the bus trip. Don Cooper has gathered some interesting photos and other material for the two day stall display which concludes the Ecofest. The display will concentrate on members' hands-on involvement with the birds in our area.

Most of us are still seeing sparrows but there is concern over a lack of fantails both in urban and rural areas.

(GILLIAN POLLOCK)

Canterbury

This spring has been a busy one for the Canterbury region as far as field meetings and surveys go. The September field meeting visited the high country around Lake Coleridge, completing a few more atlas squares whilst soaking in the breathtaking scenery. Southern Crested Grebes were found to be still present in small numbers on the lakes, and one intrepid team of the four taking part found a Wrybill on the Rakaia River.

October started with a survey of the Ashley River in conjunction with the Rakahuri/Ashley River Care Group. The river has managed to grow a large number of weeds since last year when it was almost cleared of them by a ten-year flood. Bird numbers appear to be down on last year, though the survey wasn't completed, and this will need to be confirmed with a second survey at the start of December.

A dozen Canterbury members and four Nelson members spent Labour weekend in the Blenheim area. The bird highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly the New Zealand Dabchick that has been present for a while at Taylor Dam, just south of Blenheim. A visit to the Wairau Lagoon brought good views of nesting Royal Spoonbills, and muddy-coloured water from drought-breaking rain, so that the only migratory waders seen were two Bar-tailed Godwits. A big fresh coming down the Wairau had filled the lagoon with water.

Lake Grassmere was also fairly devoid of waders with only 19 Lesser Knots, 22 Turnstones, 2 Red-necked Stints, and a Pacific Golden Plover. The rest of the weekend was taken up doing atlas work in a previously neglected area. A soon-to-be-exterminated Rook nest site south of Kekerengu was visited by a number of Canterbury members on the drive home. The weekend was also notable for the Epicurean delights provided at a potluck dinner.

The Saturday of the last weekend of October was spent surveying the



Hurunui Lakes in conjunction with Forest and Bird, with some help from DoC. The small numbers of birds present were soon counted and the rest of the time was spent enjoying the scenery and showing the birds to Forest and Bird members, many of who were relative novices as far as birds and bird surveys were concerned. Rain set in on the Saturday night, with members getting off to sleep with the sound of raindrops on canvas. Sunday's planned survey of part of the North Branch of the Hurunui River was prevented by the still inclement weather and an early start home was made.

Evening meetings have included an entertaining home video made by Colin O'Donnell over a year's stay in the UK, including some interesting shots of him and his partner crawling through small orifices in an old building in pursuit of bats. Craig Barrett gave an account of his research on temporary feeding of NZ Robins and Silvereyes and its effects on song quality. Interesting results were the outcome of hours studying sonograms. The correct design of Starling boxes was also touched upon – this species would obviously not be happy in a small cottage, preferring decent-sized housing.

Spring has been fairly quiet for unusual birds. Lake Ellesmere has more Sharp-tailed Sandpipers than it has had for a number of years. A Mongolian Dotterel was also seen there on one occasion. A Whimbrel that refuses to show its rump is still on the Ashley Estuary, and a Wandering Tattler was reported from Kaikoura Peninsula.

(NICK ALLEN)

Southland

Our annual winter wader count saw a few intrepid souls brave the chilly waters of Awarua Bay but the pickings were slim. Variable Oystercatchers, knots, Turnstones, Spur-winged Plovers and a lone godwit were all that were seen.

Eric Black reported an unusually large number of seabirds following a fishing vessel well into Bluff Harbour on 31 July. He says there were many Cape Pigeons, mollymawks and two great albatrosses, either Wandering or Royal. Could this indicate a shortage of easy pickings out in Foveaux Strait? Lloyd Esler picked up a banded Buller's Mollymawk on Oreti Beach. It had been banded as a chick on the Snares Islands on 30 July 1992. Apart from this there has been little in the way of unusual finds on beach patrols.

The first of the returning godwits was noticed by Ray Jennings on his deer farm on 4 September. This is several weeks earlier than usual. He said that a flock of 600-700 had circled and landed.

On the atlassing front, Lloyd advised us that we are over half way, which equates to 248 of the 485 squares in Southland. Ian Southey is heading into darkest Fiordland for three weeks soon and hopes to knock off some more of the more remote squares.

Lloyd's biannual visit to Mason's Bay, Stewart Island, in September was held in cold, windy conditions, and on the obligatory beach patrols the following birds were picked up: 31 juvenile Buller's Mollymawks, one Shy Mollymawk, 15 Common Diving Petrels, 10 prion sp., one each of Broad-billed Prion, Fairy Prion, Salvin's Prion and three Blue Penguins. Live birds included kiwi, New Zealand Dotterel and an old friend from past years, a fully pied Variable (Black!) Oystercatcher.

The earliest date for a Shining Cuckoo seems to be 1 October, and Ian Southey reports a flock of Long-tailed Cuckoos calling and displaying at Waitutu on 20 October. He also observed one bird having difficulty in swallowing a rather large stick insect.

Sam Thomas has a hybrid Black Stilt nesting on his farm at Tuatapere and a White Heron was also seen close to the area.

At Labour Weekend, two members of OSNZ, helped by Field Club members, did bird counts on the Milford track through the Clinton Valley for the Department of Conservation. The weather was glorious and the scenery breathtaking as we did counts every 200 m at bait stations set up for stoats and rats. The aim is to protect eggs and young of Blue Ducks and kiwi but it is hoped that the stations will also assist other birds in the valley, such as NZ Robins, Kaka and Tomtits.

27 species were observed, with the highlights being a male Blue Duck spotted by one of our younger members and Red-crowned Parakeets feeding just above our heads. Kaka and Kea flew noisily overhead, while Yellowheads were heard but not seen. Most common natives to be seen were Tomtit, Grey Warbler, Bellbird and Rifleman. We were also shown videos of a Blue Duck on a nest and a pair of kiwi sharing nesting duties. They are being monitored on a nightly basis and we were told later that the Blue Duck eggs hatched successfully, with five ducklings seen swimming on the river. These would be the first to survive to the duckling stage for a number of years.

Other ornithological news has been the recent discovery of moa bones dug up by a contractor digging drainage ditches at Dunrobin near Mossburn. At least three species of moa were discovered, including two almost complete skeletons of *Dinornis giganteus*.

(PHIL RHODES)

What's On



Auckland

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45pm in the Kohia Teachers' Centre in the grounds of Auckland College of Education, 74 Epsom Ave, Mt Eden. Enter via Gate 2 and turn right into the parking building. There is ample safe free parking. Kohia Centre is the building on the other side of the carpark.

Waikato

Evening meetings, third Wednesday of the month (except January), DoC Conference Room, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 829 8215.

Further information, please contact Paul Cuming on 07 8298215, or paul.cuming@hcc.govt.nz

20 February. Evening meeting - latest Whirinaki projects, Lake Census - Rotorua/Hamilton - ph Barry Friend (07) 8436729. On every month

Rotokaeo/Forest - ph Brian Challinor (07) 8552561. On every month

Te Ko Utu/Cambridge - ph Paul Cuming. On every month
Beach patrols - Waikato west coast beaches - ph Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751

5 Minute bird counts, Kakepuku - ph Paul Cuming

Taranaki

Evening meetings - held at 7.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month except January. Ph. Barry Hartley (06) 757 8644. Field trips on first conducive weekend thereafter.

Wanganui

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

Manawatu

Evening meetings - held 2nd Wednesday of February, May, August and November, at the Lido Centre, Park Street, Palmerston North, 8 pm.

Beach patrols - 1st Wednesday of each month and on other beaches at irregular times.

Wellington

Beach patrols - ph Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.

Evening meetings - first Monday of the month, DoC offices, 4th floor, Wellington City Library, 7.45 pm

4 February - evening meeting - Brown Teal on Mana, Kapiti and Great Barrier Is.

4 March - evening meeting - recent Chatham Is Snipe work.

Atlassing training sessions, various Wellington localities, 1-3.00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month. Ph. Stuart Nicholson (04) 934 5940.

Mist-netting and banding, Wellington Zoo. Ph. Peter Reece (04) 387 7387.

Nelson

Evening meetings - usually 1st Monday of the month, 7.15pm, upstairs in Cafe Affaire, Trafalgar St, Nelson. Ph. David (03) 543 3628 or Rob (03) 576 5371.

Canterbury

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

Beach patrols are usually held on the first Saturday of the month. Ph. Sheila Petch (03) 348 1889.

Southland

Evening meetings (in conjunction with the Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at Southland Museum, field trip usually Saturday following.

Beach patrols most weekends - ph. Phil Rhodes (03) 217 2757 or Lloyd Esler (03) 213 0404.

