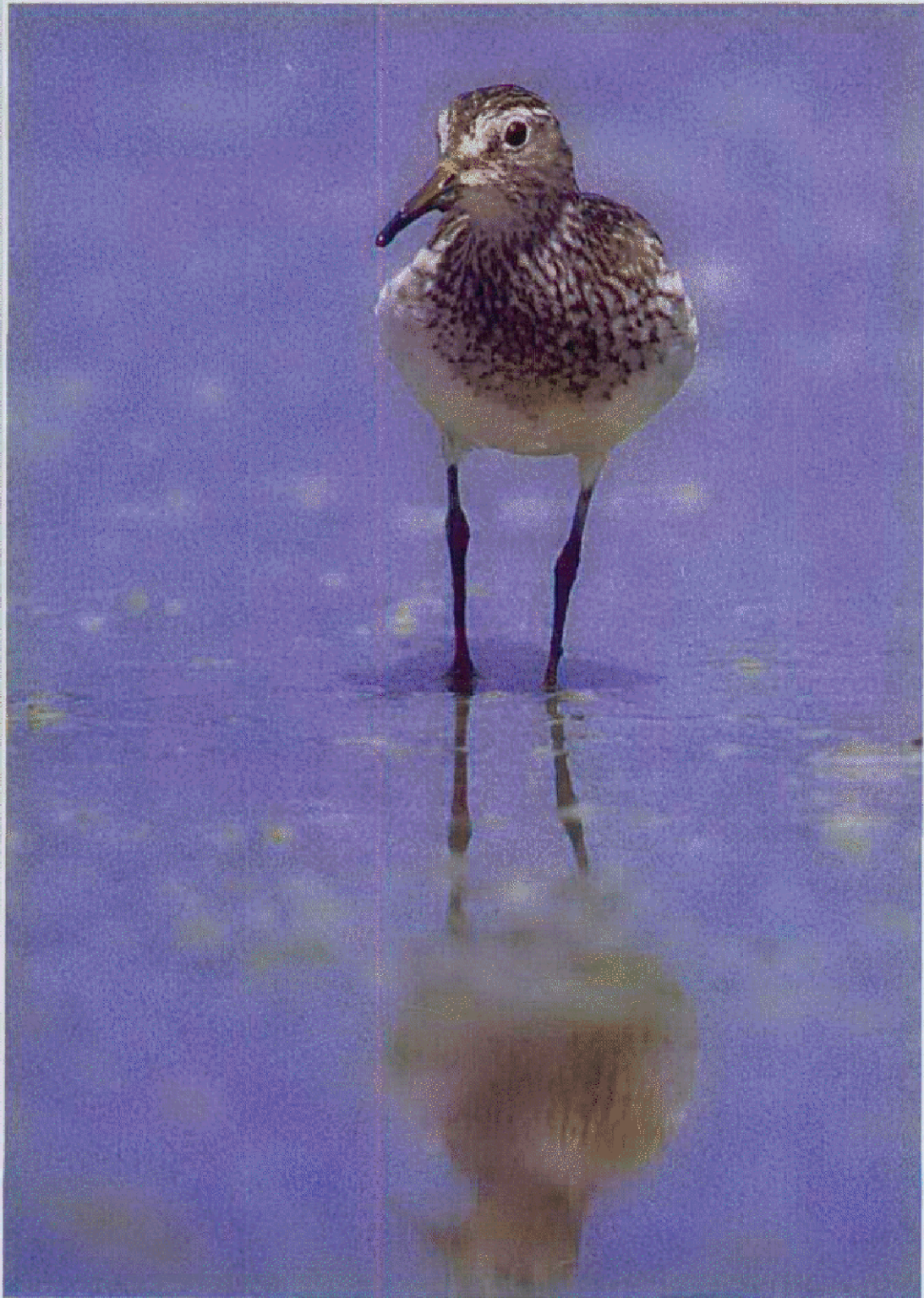
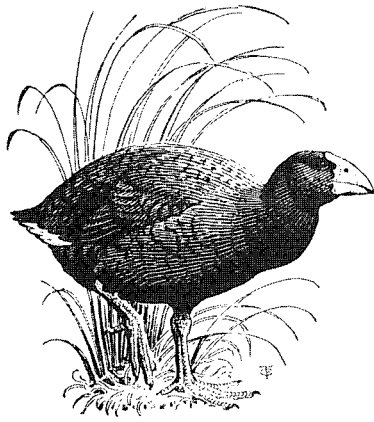


# Southern *Bird*

No. 9 March 2002. • ISSN 1175-1916







# Southern Bird

No. 9 March 2002. • ISSN 1175-1916

## Quotation

*Now the long wailing flight of geese  
Brings autumn in its train*

LI TAI PO (701-762)

## Contents

	Page
Checklist Committee	4
Atlas Update	8-9
Nest Records Database	10
Regional Roundup	12-15

## Cover Photo

*Alerted to the presence of a Ruff at Miranda last November, one of New Zealand's most outstanding bird photographers Brian Chudleigh packed his gear and headed off. While successful in photographing the bird, he was also able, for the first time in his lengthy experience with New Zealand waders, to photograph an accompanying Pectoral Sandpiper, as depicted on our front and back covers. For an account of the "chase", see article and photos on page 6.*

## Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 12397 Wellington, New Zealand. Email: [osnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:osnz@xtra.co.nz)

Edited by Tony Crocker, 118 Cones Road, Ashley, RD2 Rangiora. Tel (03) 313 4995, Fax (03) 364 2057, email: [t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:t.crocker@cont.canterbury.ac.nz)

We welcome Advertising enquiries.

## OSNZ in Taiwan

### Farewell Spit showcased in Taipei

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand received an invitation from the Wild Bird Society of Taipei to make a presentation on Farewell Spit at their annual bird fair. The WBST is a non-government organization founded in 1973 with similar aspirations to the Ornithological Society. They too promote wild bird and habitat protection through training, public awareness and research.

The Taipei Wild Bird Society has been working for 20 years to educate and promote conservation ethics in this fast-developing part of the world. One of their main projects is to conserve one of the last remaining pieces of wetland in the vicinity of the capital Taipei, named Kuan-Du. To celebrate the official opening of the Kuan-Du Nature Park, a bird fair was organized to promote bird awareness in Taiwan and to highlight the variety of different sites that birds are passing through during their migration in the flyway.

The Shorebird Site Network was invited to show some of the different sites that are important for waders. People could see the different sites in the flyway from as far north as Kamchatka in Russia and as far south as Farewell Spit in New Zealand. The central region of the flyway was represented by the Philippines (Olang Island) and Hong Kong (Mai Po). Mark Barter represented the Shorebird Working Group of Wetlands International.

The Kuan-Du Nature Park is located in the junction of Tamsui and Keelung Rivers, a low-lying place on the southwest of Kuan-Du plain in the Taipei Basin. It is a place of contrasts with the surrounding city developments at its doorstep. Taipei is a big busy city. The first obvious difference is the amazing number of scooters that participate in the whirlpool of lawless traffic. The other aspect of contrast with home is the intertwining of skyscrapers and rice paddies on the outskirts of the city.

In the Nature Park, the management of animals and plants is focused on protection and where access is guaranteed to enjoy and learn from this facility. A concrete wall, developed in the past to prevent flooding of low-lying areas, segregates the park from a mangrove area along the river banks. The nature park inside the dike measures 57 ha and was used previously as farmland.

The Taipei City Council bought this area for an astronomical amount of money. The TWBS has been working very hard to secure its position in future management of the park. They are responsible for running the park for which they have to find their own resources. Local or government money was only for the park to be set up, not for the future running costs.

When walking through the entrance of Kuan-Du, you pass along a network of tracks through a few ponds with a variety of wetland habitats. A three-storey visitor centre overlooks the wetland. With telescopes it is possible to see a variety of bird species visiting the different wetland areas. A number of video cameras, positioned at various strategic places, provide views of the different birds that are visiting the wetland. The organizers have succeeded in providing access and educational opportunities for everyone, without barriers.

After the farmland was gradually flooded, the area rapidly developed into a wetland of great significance. Thousands of waterbirds can be seen in



the northern winter. Long-term surveys of the area have recorded 229 species. Waders are particularly dominant in the northward migration, with the main species being Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Common Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Greenshank, Dunlin, Wood Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

On the first day, the City Government organized a welcome party. The enthusiasm of a number of the governmental representatives, including the President of Taiwan, fuelled hope that the seeds for an expansion of the Kuan-Du spirit are well in place. The fair consisted of a combination of different stands where people could pass and read and talk with the local bird societies or with the people, such as ourselves, attending from the outskirts of the flyway. Almost 30,000 people visited the fair.

Keith Woodley from the Miranda Naturalists' Trust represented Firth of Thames last year. Though many people had a problem with the English language, Keith did a good job last year because many were very well informed about the Wrybill. That of course put Farewell Spit on the back-foot because there are almost no Wrybills at Farewell Spit.

After emphasising the fact that Farewell Spit hosts 10% of the world population of the Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit, which makes the longest non-stop migratory trip of all known birds, Wrybills were relegated to a good second place. The Farewell Spit stand provided an overview of the different landscapes, highlighting the geological development of the spit and the changes in winter and summer birds. Of course the gannet colony formed a part of the display too.

After the fair I joined Mark Barter on a trip along the west coast of Taiwan. The Masters students of Tunghai University, located at Taichung, showed us a variety of issues and problems that play a role in the coastal environment. The university has a small group of people working on coastal studies with a particular interest in shorebirds. The group was very inspiring and showed great enthusiasm. They are doing an enormous job to highlight the importance of wetlands through their studies and management proposals.

Taiwan has lost 70% of its coastal mudflats and wetlands since 1990, through reclamation for urban, industrial and agricultural purposes. This is not an exception in our flyway where almost half the world's population live. Wetlands and coastal areas in particular are under enormous pressure through urbanisation and reclamation. The long-term survival of many long distance migratory waders depends on the management of important staging sites in this region and the dedication and commitment of many conservation-minded people.

The first project we visited was Fu Bow, in the NW of Taiwan. Fish, shrimp, shellfish ponds and paddies dominate the landscape in this area. Fu Bow consists of 230 ha owned by 300 families or 1000 people. In the proposal for new management of the region they want to decommission 10% of the area with the idea that the reestablishment of birds can attract more people into the area for ecotourism. This creates an opportunity to sell more products from the area directly. The decommissioning of the ponds can create breeding habitat for Pied Stilts and also Painted Snipe and migratory waders like Kentish Plovers and Dunlin during high tide.

The next day we visited Szu-Tsao, near the city of Tainan. The decommissioned salt works are 515 ha of which 50 ha will be protected for Pied Stilt breeding habitat. In the protected area we saw Little Egret, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Redshank, Dunlin, Green Sandpiper, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint,

Black-tailed Godwit, Eastern Curlew, Kentish Plover and Greenshank.

The next visit was to Chi-Gu, to the north of Tinan. This area is often visited by significant numbers of Black-faced Spoonbills. We were not disappointed and were able to identify 300 birds out of the estimated total world population of 900 birds. Other species present were Bar-tailed Godwit, 20 Saunders' Gulls, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, Grey Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint, Dunlin, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Greenshank, Lesser Sand Plover, Redshank, Kentish Plover and Little Ringed Plover.

On the last day we visited Ta-Tu. This is a major coastal reclamation area where huge seawalls have been erected to create massive industrial development. It is difficult to estimate the enormous loss of roosting and feeding habitat. Mark Barter visited many of these areas only 15 years ago when they were still coastal mudflats. In many instances, these big projects are followed by illegal development of ponds for shrimps, shellfish, and fish. Authorities do not really make a big deal of these practices because power supply and buildings are all soon established. The only place for the birds to roost is in the ponds that are emptied after harvesting.

The most common species at the time of the visit were Kentish Plover, Dunlin, Greenshank and Common Sandpiper. We saw some 300 Eurasian Curlews at a high water roost. This is around a third of the 1000 which now use Taiwan in the non-breeding season. There is great concern for this species. It is very easily disturbed and it has crashed in recent years from 4000 to 1000 in Taiwan.

The Industrial Development Board for this area decided to make a contribution to conservation by erecting a bird hide. Without consulting with the local bird groups a design consisting of plastic posts was built near the curlew roost. This project of \$US 200,000 is probably the most extravagant bird lookout ever made. A lot of sand is trapped by this structure so within a short time it will be buried which is probably the best solution.

I met many dedicated and motivated people who are trying to protect the last remaining coastal areas in Taiwan. Though the costs are gigantic, projects like Kuan-Du do raise overall awareness of wetland conservation. This is of utmost importance in the staging areas for migratory waders in SE Asia. I would like to thank the Wild Bird Society of Taipei for their invitation and OSNZ and Farewell Spit Safaris for the financial support in setting up the display material and Georgina Fettes for the translation of the bird names into Chinese.

**ROB SCHUCKARD**

## Spurs for Defence?

It is often said that Spur-winged Plovers use their spurs for defence. In the many times I have approached their nests, they have always kept well away and I have never seen them use their spurs to attack harriers, oystercatchers or other species with which they have disagreements. I am keen to get reports of Spur-winged Plovers using their spurs as weapons. Can anyone confirm that they are used in combat?

**LLOYD ESLER**



## New Checklist Committee

The third and most recent edition of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* was published in 1990. It was produced by a Checklist Committee of the Society under the convenorship of Graham Turbott, which was disbanded shortly afterwards. Since then, Brian Gill has maintained a file of taxonomic changes affecting the New Zealand avifauna.

The 1990 *Checklist* is out-of-date for several reasons. For example, revisions of some groups in the New Zealand avifauna have been published since then, and records of several species new to this country since 1990 have been accepted by the Rare Birds Committee. In addition, a very comprehensive "Working list of breeding bird species of the New Zealand region at first human contact", which takes into account the most recent research affecting New Zealand avifaunal taxa - authored by Richard Holdaway, Trevor Worthy and Alan Tennyson - was published in the June 2001 issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Zoology*.

Richard Holdaway prepared a paper on the subject of a new *Checklist* which included recommendations on such pertinent matters as the formation and composition of a new Checklist Committee, and the manner of publication of the results of its deliberations. This paper was considered initially by the Scientific Committee, and then by Council at its meeting in Lower Hutt last October. Council expressed its appreciation to Richard Holdaway for his thoughtful and helpful paper.

Council decided that the Society would proceed with the preparation of a new *Checklist*. A draft Checklist is to be completed and submitted to it by the end of 2004. Hopefully it will be published - in a form yet to be determined - by the end of 2005. Council also decided that a new Checklist Committee, which will henceforth be a permanent committee of the Society, will consist of six Society members appointed by Council. In accordance with our Constitution, the President will be an *ex officio* member of the Committee.

Brian Bell, Brian Gill, Geoff Chambers, Ricardo Palma, Alan Tennyson and Trevor Worthy have subsequently accepted appointment to the Committee. Brian Gill has been elected by Committee members as Chairperson. Council acknowledges the magnitude and importance of the task before the Checklist Committee, and is grateful to those people for taking it on.

Members of the Committee have already agreed that the new *Checklist* should be a completely self-contained taxonomic work which will entirely supersede the 1990 edition. It is probable that the new *Checklist* will have the same form as that one, but the Committee has yet to discuss and agree upon such all-important and often controversial matters as sequence and taxonomy. Members of the Committee propose to meet in Wellington on 10 April next to consider those and other relevant issues.

Future Checklist Committee reports will be read by Council and Society members with much interest.

DAVID MEDWAY  
President

**! PLEASE NOTE !**  
**DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE**  
**WILL BE 10th MAY**

## Restoring the dawn chorus

Much has been said and written recently about current efforts to restore the avian dawn chorus to parts of mainland New Zealand. It is impossible for people living now to know what that dawn chorus was actually like in our forests long ago. Nevertheless, an indication of what it must have been like in many North Island forests about a century ago is provided by the following two first-hand accounts.

The first account is from page 68 of the little-known 1946 book by W.H. Skinner *Reminiscences of a Taranaki surveyor* (Thomas Avery & Sons Ltd, New Plymouth). Skinner wrote of the following unique event which occurred when he was surveying near the present township of Inglewood in country which was then heavily forested but has long since been converted into prime dairy pasture.

My central camp was pitched in an old-time Maori clearing fringed with the beautiful native forest. In the early hours of the morning of September 19, 1885, we witnessed the total eclipse of the sun. We were awakened at daylight as usual by the outburst of melody from the *tui* and *makomako*, which continued for awhile until the eclipse advanced and the sky gradually darkened. With the approach of the total eclipse the silence of midnight came over the whole forest. As the sun gradually became uncovered the apparently bewildered birds ventured with doubtful isolated notes to resume their song, and with the return of daylight the full burst of the dawn chorus broke forth once more. This behaviour of the birds in their primitive natural environment was a unique and uncanny experience and left a lasting impression with those of us who watched and listened throughout the eclipse.

The second account is from the *Auckland Weekly News* of 6 July 1911.

Writing some time ago from his camp in the Riariaki Block, South Waimarino, Raetihi, Mr. H.V. Girdlestone, Government surveyor, said: "Like all other people who have to spend their time in the backblocks away from companions, I am greatly interested in the habits of the birds of the bush, and look upon them all as my friends. I am surveying on rough bush country between Manganui-o-te-ao and Retaruke Rivers in a part where there are over 100,000 acres of solid bush, and find that many birds that are put down as rare are fairly common in these parts. I have 'The Animals of New Zealand' in camp with me, and have been greatly interested in it. First and foremost among the noticeable things regarding birds, I think the welcoming in of the day by a full chorus is a regular treat to hear. On a fine morning, I lie in my bunk and can almost imagine I am in some cathedral city, with the chimes in full swing, for there are hundreds of bell-birds in this block, and I do not wonder at Captain Cook being charmed when he first heard them. The tuis help to swell the chorus from the larger trees, and right alongside my tent the robins, tits, bush canaries, warblers, fantails, and others join in with their different songs and whistlings. The robin, especially, seems to put all he knows into his very sweet refrain ..."

DAVID MEDWAY



# Campbell Island

Campbell Island's Southern Royal Albatrosses are very approachable birds, researcher Paul Sagar told the Canterbury meeting last June. "As long as you are slow and careful they stay around," he said. "It's easy to get photographs." The evidence was on the screen: tremendous photographs of the great birds on their nests among this subantarctic island's tussock country.

Campbell was the last of the subantarctic islands to be discovered, in 1810. It is at 52.5° south, among cool waters, about 5°C during the winter. The island is 17 km from east to west, 15.5 km from north to south, and Perseverance Harbour is 8 km long. It is mostly covered in scrubland and tussock.

It was sealed out by 1830, and there are now no marine mammals in any number. Hooker's sealions are the commonest, with a small breeding population along the northwest coast. Fur seals are making a comeback, and Paul also reported elephant seals, and a leopard seal seen on the west coast.

In 1895 the Government leased the island to a company for sheep and cattle farming. It did not prove economic because of the distance to markets, and the last shepherds were taken off in 1931. A meteorological station was set up after World War II and continued until 1997. Sheep and cattle were removed from half the island, pushed back behind a fence line. They were later restricted to one peninsula, and finally removed in 1990. There are 228 plant species on the island and 143 are endemic to the island.

There are 8,200 Southern Royal Albatross pairs nesting on the island. They suffered a severe population reduction during the time of the farming, because of overgrazing, and Paul also believes that some would have been taken for food. Some are being caught by fishing long-liners. The birds weigh up to 9 kg, and have a 3.1m wingspan, and can be distinguished by a black line on the edge of the upper mandible. They also breed on the Auckland Islands. A few hybrids breed at Taiaroa Heads, on the Otago mainland.

Nothing much now bothers the birds, which may explain why they are so approachable. There are rats on the island but the last feral cats were got rid of in 1980.

Black-browed Albatrosses form dense colonies on the northern part of the island. The population was estimated at 19,000 to 26,000 in the 1987-94 period. The birds weigh 3 kg and have a 2.2 m to 2.3 m wingspan. Annual survival is 94.2% for breeding adults. 24% of young live to return at age five, and breed from age six onwards. They are a long-lived species. Most of the decline in the 1970s and 1980s was through young birds being accidentally caught as bycatch. The population is now increasing at 3.1% a year.

The Grey-headed Albatross, a 3.3 kg bird whose range covers the entire Southern Ocean, nests on the island. It breeds every second year, if successful with its first attempt. Large numbers get killed on longlines. There are 6,000 pairs on Campbell Island.

1900 pairs of the Light-mantled Sooty Albatross make Campbell Island their occasional home. Paul says they are very much a pelagic species.

There are an estimated 450 to 600 pairs of Yellow-eyed Penguins nesting on the island, and a declining population of Rockhopper Penguins. Numbers have plummeted from 800,000 Rockhoppers in the 1940s, to 50,000 in the mid-1980s, and they are still going down. Paul says it appears nothing land-based is causing the decline. There is no predation by rats or cats, but skuas can be seen working in pairs to scare birds off nests and then raiding the eggs or chicks.

There is speculation that an increase in the sea surface

temperature may be causing their prey to move further away, leaving the birds starving. All populations around the Southern Ocean have declined over the same period. Paul says that in general crested penguin species seem to be in severe trouble. Their breeding success seems to be all right but the chicks may not been feeding well once they get to sea.

There are 70 pairs of Northern Giant Petrels nesting on Campbell Island, and 1000 to 2000 Campbell Island Shags feed in flocks in the calmer waters of Perseverance Harbour.

There are only 100 pairs of skuas, and they have been seen preying on the rats which are on the island in large numbers and out and about in daytime. A team is currently on Campbell to get rid of the rats. Paul believes much of the bird population on Campbell Island would benefit from the extermination of the rats. "If it's successful, it will be possible to restore the island to its full conservation value," he said.

DAVID CLARKSON

## A Swift at Waiongana

On the afternoon of Sunday 9 December, while watching a couple of golden plovers and a Turnstone flying over the lagoon, I saw another bird higher up which I first mistook for a Welcome Swallow. When it swooped down in front of me I saw it was not.

Watching it through 50x10 binoculars, I saw it was generally dark, with obvious white flanks and undertail coverts, and as it climbed into the stiff southerly wind I noted the crescent-shaped curve of the wings. During the 5-6 minutes I had it under observation, it flapped its wings and flared its tail only once. Swooping and climbing, it made steady progress inland until lost from sight.

Checking the Field Guide, I realised it was a Spine-tailed Swift. I sent off a UBR, and had my sighting confirmed. Another first for Waiongana and myself - further proof that Waiongana is a premier birding locality.

PETER FRYER

## Nominations for Regional Representatives 2003

Each region of the Society shall have a Regional Representative who will be an Officer of the Society and as such is responsible to the Council for the management of the region. Each RR shall serve for one year (from 1 January 2003) and is eligible for re-election.

Nominations for the Regional Representative of each region of the Society will close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 2002. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must be a financial member of the Society.

If more than one valid nomination is received by the Secretary a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2003 year.

CHRISTINE REED  
Secretary

# Great Day Out at Miranda

Brian Chudleigh, one of New Zealand's most outstanding bird photographers, describes the excitement of the chase at Miranda recently, the day our cover photographs were taken.

Keith Woodley, manager at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Shorebird Centre, phoned me early on 19 November to tell me that he had spotted a Ruff on the Stilt Ponds and was I interested in trying to get some photos? Was I ever, but my day was organised in advance and the forecast was for deteriorating weather over the next few days. I anticipated that the Ruff would stay. Its arrival was very late in the season, so I thought I could plan to visit whenever the weather came right.

Next day dawned cloudy but bright, and the temptation of at least seeing a bird that was completely new was too great, and with a couple of camera bodies and lots of film, Cushla and I headed off.

The bird took little finding. Its gloriously scalloped plumage and brilliant orange legs made it most conspicuous among the dull-plumaged waders nearby. Unlike the Red-necked Phalarope which came as a Christmas present for me at Miranda in 1996, the Ruff was no easy target. It took off when I was still about 50 metres away and headed out with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers to feed near the entrance to Access Bay.

We decided that the only option was to head back to the Stilt Ponds and just sit and wait on its eastern shore as close as possible to where we first saw the bird. It returned but we missed it, eventually spotting it dozing, concealed behind a clump of *Sarcicornia*. A real test of patience ensued waiting for action, but eventually the Ruff moved off to feed, though making little progress in our direction.

Keeping us entertained meanwhile was what looked like a group of three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a Curlew Sandpiper and a Red-necked Stint, all of which were feeding with the Ruff at various times. I suddenly noticed that one of the Sharp-tails had yellow legs – a Pectoral Sandpiper, its distinctly cut-off bib becoming more obvious as it neared us.

This group of three birds moved steadily away from the Ruff, and even closer to us, the Pectoral leading the way. I had been photographing using a 1.4 converter attached to my 600 mm lens, trying to at least get an identifiable image or two on film and not expecting what happened next.

For 20 years I had tried in vain to obtain decent, close images of Pectoral Sandpipers in New Zealand, despite having seen the species many times at Miranda and Kaituna Cut. All I had got for my trouble was a Nikon FA camera and power winder dropped in the drink at the very same pond while in pursuit of that very species.



*The Ruff which started it all.*

I'd also had an interesting experience at Lady Elliot Island off the Queensland coast. We were there to photograph various terns, noddies and Red-tailed Tropicbirds. The island is promoted as a dive centre, and at the training pool in the middle of the resort was a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper, which could be seen feeding daily on the grass or dozing in the shade of trees, usually close to the fence, a picnic table or chair, the tiles of the pool area or some other man-made object in close proximity. Capturing it full-frame with my 300 mm lens was really easy, but isolating it from evidence of humans virtually impossible.

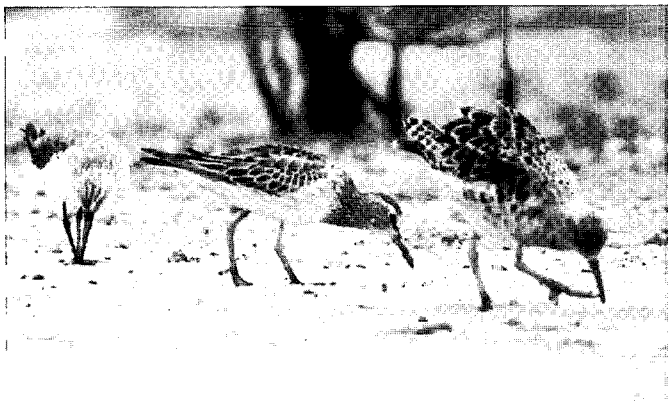
Now, off came the converter, but then with the Pectoral moving ever closer I almost ran out of close focusing ability as it closed to within five metres of us. Also any closer and it would not have fitted into the viewfinder!

The Ruff was far less obliging, and I counted myself lucky to get some very distant but recognisable shots, some in the company of the Curlew Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and Red-necked Stints.

I was lucky I did not delay my visit. The weather was hazy bright, as good as you can get for bird photography in the middle of the day, especially at this season when full sun produces appalling images with very harsh shadows and little detail below the bird. The Ruff's legs would have shown little colour in such conditions. The weather turned foul for the rest of the week, and the Ruff was not seen thereafter.

## BRIAN CHUDLEIGH

*All photos by Brian Chudleigh, Miranda, 20 November, 2001.*



*Curlew Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and Ruff.*



*Curlew Sandpiper and Ruff.*





## Fairy Terns – best ever breeding

It has been a fantastic breeding season for NZ Fairy Terns this year, and several new records have been set. Once again the Northland volunteers – Audrey, Clare, Den, Dianna, Jean and Marie have been a tremendous help to the DoC staff in protecting our most endangered bird.

At Mangawhai and Waipu, we equalled our best number of chicks produced in a season since monitoring began in 1983, with six chicks fledged. However, from the protection programme overall, which includes the breeding site at Papakanui Spit (South Head, Kaipara) eight chicks have fledged – our best result ever.

New records set in Northland include the earliest recorded nests and fledged chicks at Mangawhai and three chicks fledged from Waipu, a record for this site. This season at Mangawhai, not only one pair nested earlier than they have previously, but two other nests were found at the same time by Audrey and myself. The pairs nested more than a week earlier than the early pair of the last two seasons.

Of the two pairs breeding at Waipu, one of the females, a ten year old bird that has bred unsuccessfully at Waipu for the last five seasons, has finally fledged not one but two chicks for the first time. She deserves an award – conservation of course!

All the chicks were colour-banded and have now left their natal sites. They are moving around between the flock sites on the east and west coasts, where we will try and keep track of them.

KATRINA HANSEN

## VOC banding in Otago

Back in the 80s and 90s, wader counts came up with a large number of Variable (or Black!) Oystercatchers on various sports fields around Dunedin. Where did they come from? Why so many? A start would be to identify the individual bird, to be able to follow it on its travels.

So a colour banding programme was created. Adults are caught with the aid of a drop trap, triggered by the birds with a string stretched over the eggs. Juveniles are caught while this banded is still faster than these runners! The first bird was banded in November 1993. Now a total of 57 adults and 21 juveniles have been adorned with bands, all of which have a black band somewhere in the combination.

Very few sightings have been reported away from their breeding grounds. A few adults, all banded on Otago Peninsula beaches, have been reported from Warrington Beach, Hancock Park and Taieri Beach. Juveniles wander more - they move a bit on the peninsula, and have been seen as far as the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Christchurch. This is believed to be the longest known distance a VOC has travelled in New Zealand. Two juveniles have been discovered breeding.

Sadly, most Black Oystercatchers have not yet learnt to keep their nest away from the high tide mark. Some fail to rear a chick successfully for a number of years, having their nest washed away in some cases up to three times. A few have seen the light, and nest in the dunes of the peninsula or on ledges at Brighton and Taieri Mouth, but here they also nest on roadside berms with disastrous results - adults get run over or nests are destroyed by parking cars.

Where to from here? Mortality is apparently higher than initially thought. Some adults have gone through at

least three partners in these eight years. As they are supposed to mate for life, if another partner turns up it is assumed that the previous one has died. I hope to band another 50 birds at least in the next five years.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

## Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 2003

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 2002. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary.

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

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

CHRISTINE REED  
(Hon. Secretary)

## Pigeon bath-time

In early December my family noticed a New Zealand Pigeon in an unfamiliar position in a manuka tree. The perch is regularly used by pigeons here in Dunedin. The bird had been sitting for some time in the traditional near-vertical pigeon position. The branch is about 50 mm in diameter and is reasonably level.

It had just started to rain fairly hard and the bird was observed to lift its left wing over its head so as to expose the full underside of the wing to the rain. The left wing was at approximately 45° of the vertical on the right hand side of the bird. This position was held for approximately 30 seconds. The bird lowered its left wing and raised its right wing to a similar point on its left hand side. It repeated this wing lifting three times with each wing.

The bird also adopted a near horizontal sitting position and fluffed out its body feathers. It was seen to twist its body so that alternate sides were facing upwards and exposed to the rain. At these times the wing on the exposed side was held down in a very similar position to that used by ducks during a broken wing display, and body and wing feathers were held open to allow rain access. This position was adopted several times throughout the observations. On two occasions the bird was observed to shake its wings in a way similar to that used by sparrows during bathing in puddles.

As the rain eased the bird adopted a standard pigeon position and started grooming. With the starting of the rain the bird once again moved to a near horizontal position and exposed alternate sides to the weather. As the rain eased grooming began once more.

Around 30 minutes later it flew to a sycamore tree three metres away and continued to groom. It finally left the area, flying south-west a few minutes later.

JIM WILSON

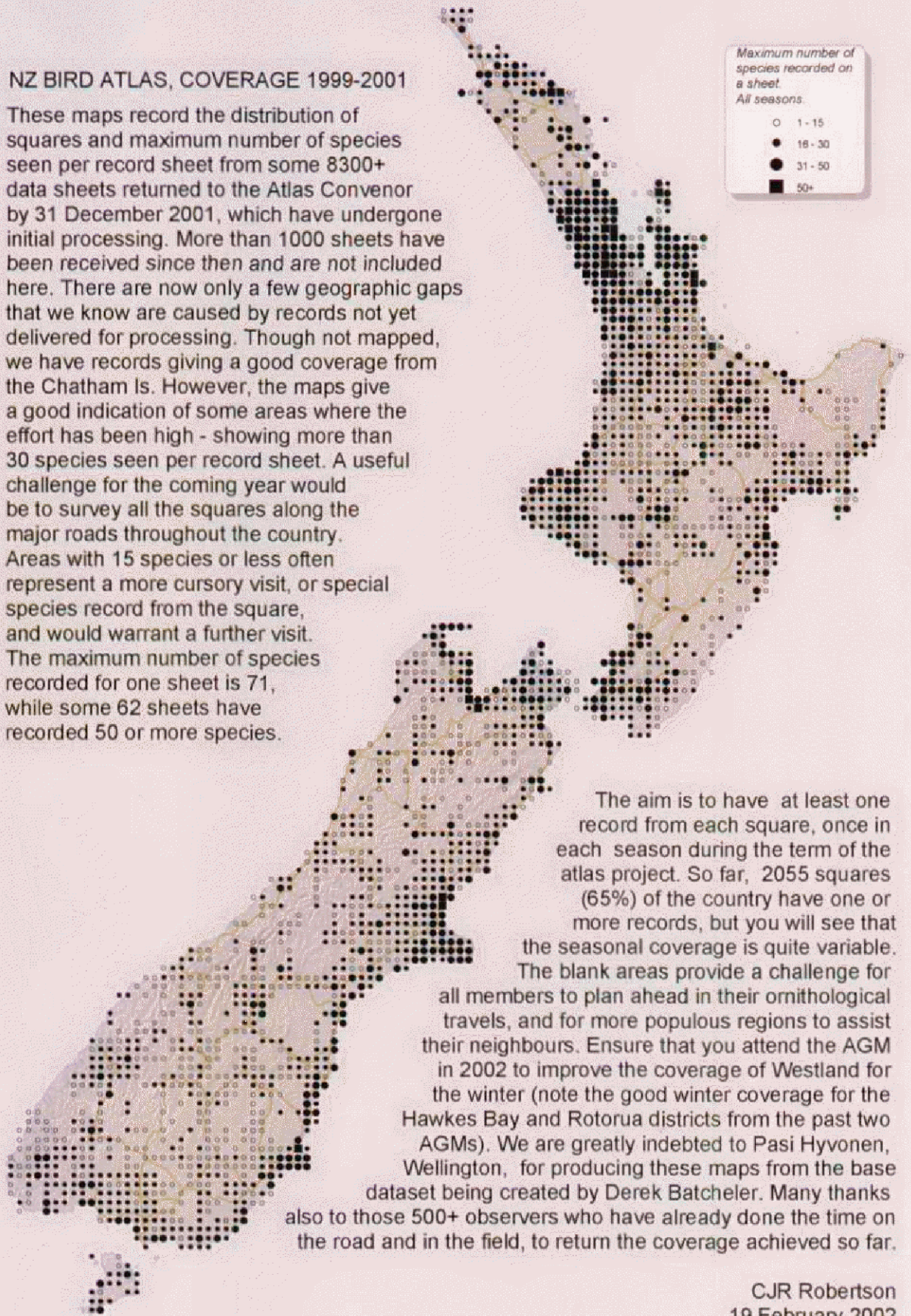




# ATLAS UPDATE

## NZ BIRD ATLAS, COVERAGE 1999-2001

These maps record the distribution of squares and maximum number of species seen per record sheet from some 8300+ data sheets returned to the Atlas Convenor by 31 December 2001, which have undergone initial processing. More than 1000 sheets have been received since then and are not included here. There are now only a few geographic gaps that we know are caused by records not yet delivered for processing. Though not mapped, we have records giving a good coverage from the Chatham Is. However, the maps give a good indication of some areas where the effort has been high - showing more than 30 species seen per record sheet. A useful challenge for the coming year would be to survey all the squares along the major roads throughout the country. Areas with 15 species or less often represent a more cursory visit, or special species record from the square, and would warrant a further visit. The maximum number of species recorded for one sheet is 71, while some 62 sheets have recorded 50 or more species.



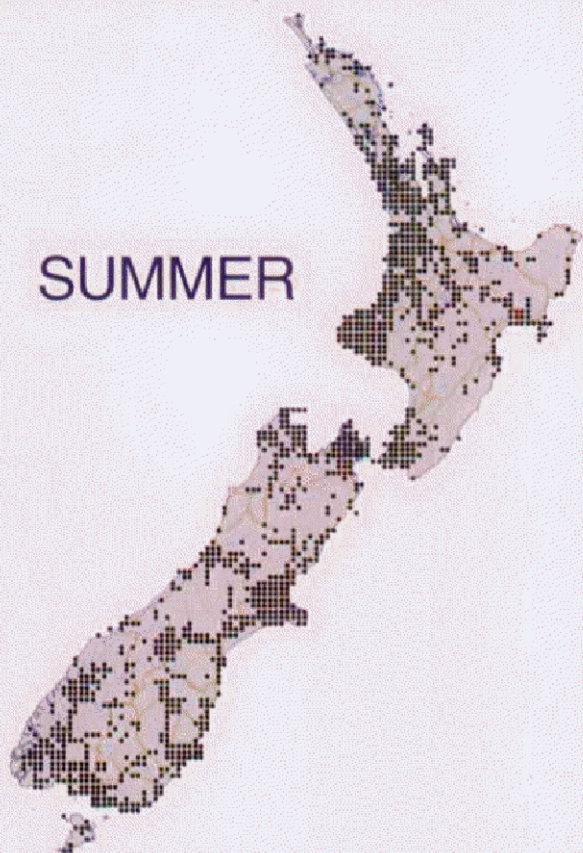
The aim is to have at least one record from each square, once in each season during the term of the atlas project. So far, 2055 squares (65%) of the country have one or more records, but you will see that the seasonal coverage is quite variable.

The blank areas provide a challenge for all members to plan ahead in their ornithological travels, and for more populous regions to assist their neighbours. Ensure that you attend the AGM in 2002 to improve the coverage of Westland for the winter (note the good winter coverage for the Hawkes Bay and Rotorua districts from the past two AGMs). We are greatly indebted to Pasi Hyvonen, Wellington, for producing these maps from the base dataset being created by Derek Batcheler. Many thanks also to those 500+ observers who have already done the time on the road and in the field, to return the coverage achieved so far.

CJR Robertson  
19 February 2002



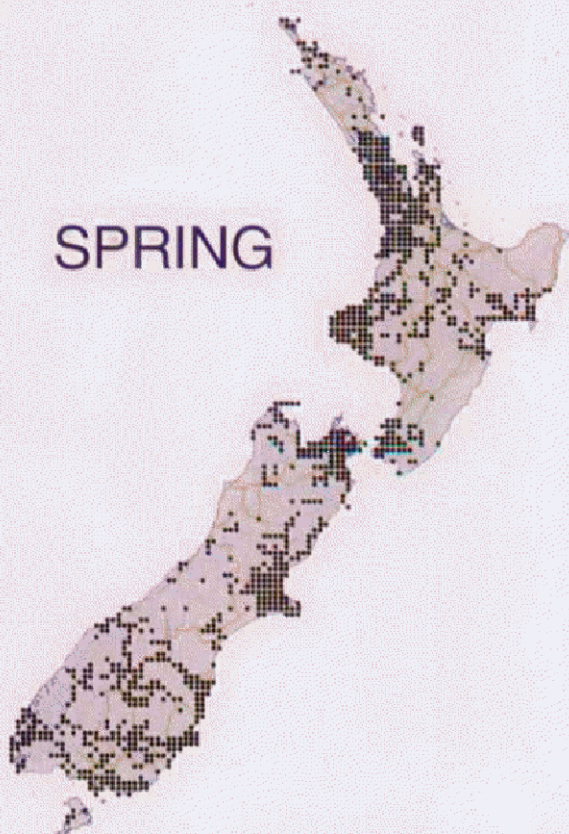
SUMMER



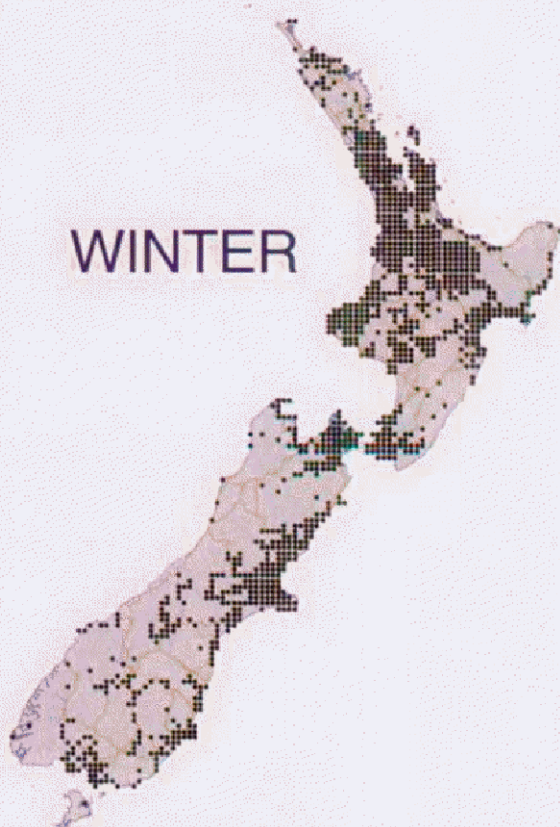
AUTUMN



SPRING



WINTER



Squares for which seasonal records have been received by 31 Dec 2001.



# Nest Records Database

One of the Ornithological Society's long-standing aims is being realised - the computerisation of its nest record cards. In this scheme members, and other invaluable volunteers, record the contents and performance of each nest that they find, thus providing data on breeding success for a wide variety of species. Many other countries (such as Australia, America and Britain) run similar schemes, but New Zealanders should be proud that their scheme is the longest running one in the world, with some cards recording data collected 70 years ago.

Computerisation is immensely time-consuming, but it provides two major advantages. Firstly it guarantees the permanency of the unique and invaluable records. Electronic copies of the data can be kept in a separate location to the original cards, and thus insure against the loss of data in the event of a fire or other disaster destroying the originals. Secondly computerisation allows researchers to access and analyse the data very rapidly. The current need to travel to Wellington and sort through the cards by hand prevented some researchers from using the data.

The cards are initially being computerised at Lincoln University for use in a one-year post-doctoral research project. The research is being conducted by Karl Evans with collaboration from Richard Duncan (at Lincoln) and Tim Blackburn (Birmingham University, UK). The aim is to use introduced species to investigate the factors that influence the evolution of clutch size.

In general southern hemisphere birds have smaller clutches than their northern hemisphere counterparts, and the introduction of species from Britain to New Zealand has produced a perfect natural experiment to investigate the reasons for this. As the same species are present in both localities, any genetic or ecological differences between northern and southern hemisphere species that may cause the smaller clutches in the southern hemisphere are controlled for.

Therefore, a comparison of the New Zealand and British Nest Record Card data will allow the role of environmental variation in controlling clutch size to be investigated. As well as determining if differences in the environment between the two hemispheres have caused differences in clutch size the researchers hope to be able to identify which environmental factors are responsible for the differences.

The first step of the research project, checking all the introduced species' nest record cards for any errors and re-coding the old style cards so that their format matches the new style cards, has now been completed. The next task is to input the 7,000 or so cards onto the Access database that has been created. Once this task has been accomplished it is hoped that resources will allow the native species to be entered as well.

The investigation of factors that influence the evolution of clutch size is just one example of the numerous important questions that can be answered using the OSNZ's nest record card data. Computerisation will certainly facilitate the use of the data, but it requires the data to be there in the first place. Many crucial conservation questions can only be answered thanks to the long-running nature of the scheme.

To ensure that these questions can be answered in the future is it essential that data continue to be submitted. Data from any nests are valuable, but information from nests that have been visited more than once, and those where the outcome is known, are of particular

importance. If you have such data hidden in your notebooks then please contribute them to the scheme. Alternatively, if you wish to start recording nest histories then a set of cards and instructions can be obtained from Russell Thomas (whose address is given below). By doing so you will contribute to many important research projects and ensure that OSNZ continues to run the longest running nest record card scheme in the world.

## Further information

By the end of the year the Scientific Committee and Council will determine how the data will be made available to members and other researchers. In the meantime, anybody who wishes to access the data should contact Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Ecology & Entomology Group, P.O. Box 84, Lincoln University. E-mail [Wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:Wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz)

Completed cards and requests for blank cards and data entry instructions should be sent to Russell Thomas at Rangitane Rd, Kerikeri, RD 1, Northland, 0470. E-mail [rusnles@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rusnles@paradise.net.nz) or telephone 09 407 4426.

KARL EVANS

## Completing Beach Patrol cards

Having just summarised beach patrol cards for 2000, I'd like to take the opportunity to make a few comments that will assist in this task in future years. The following is relevant;

### Beach patrol sections

The Sections (Districts on the card) were last described in 1997, when a change was made to the Auckland East and Auckland West boundaries to accommodate Northland East and West Sections. The map on p.202 of Volume 44 Part 4 of *Notornis* in 1997 shows the beach patrol sections by diagram and name. They are **not** the same as the regional boundaries.

### When to submit cards

Based on the theory that completed cards are better in the hands of the Convenor than the recorder, send them as soon as possible! All cards being received within three months of the end of the year is a good target to aim for, but definitely not 16 months after, as recently experienced.

### Acknowledgement of receipt of cards

Provided the Beach Patrol Convenor has a return e-mail address, the receipt of every batch of cards will be acknowledged. Occasional acknowledgement of cards will be made where only a postal address is known.

### Completing cards

Adopting a disciplined approach to completing the cards will ensure that all the necessary information is recorded. It is suggested that the following order for each item be followed:

1. Section (district).
2. Kilometres of beach.
3. Date.
4. Name of beach, and a description of the length if not all is patrolled.
5. Observer and address, (and e-mail contact).





6. Previous weather.
7. Species found, in checklist order, for the seabirds. The use of the Heather and Robertson Field Guide common names would be helpful.
8. Total Seabirds.
9. Other birds recovered, at the bottom of the seabird list.

**Information that tests the Convenor's patience (Actual events)**

- No Section/ District recorded and the beach is unknown to the Convenor.
- No Section/District or beach name recorded.
- No kilometres of beach given.
- No total, or a wrong total given, for seabirds recovered.
- The total for seabirds includes the 'other' species.

The only way for the Convenor to get missing or correct wrong information is to contact the person submitting the card, and this can be time-consuming.

Thank you for your assistance, and good beach patrolling.

**LAURIE HOWELL**  
Convenor

## Marlborough Sounds birds

A special volume of *Notornis* is being planned to cover papers on the birds of the Marlborough Sounds. While many ornithologists have visited the area and have data on the birds, there have been few papers written about the birdlife.

It is planned to have two or three papers outlining the birds on the various islands, some survey work carried out on the mainland and some papers relating to specific studies carried out in the area. The key personnel who have worked in the area have already been approached and have expressed a willingness to be involved. Some papers have already been promised.

I would love to hear from any others who would like to contribute either by providing a paper on a specific topic but also from those who have just a few incidental records.

If you have something to contribute please let me know as soon as possible.

**BRIAN BELL**  
Co-ordinator  
P.O. Box 14-492  
Wellington  
E-mail: [wmil@clear.net.nz](mailto:wmil@clear.net.nz)

## New Members and Donations

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Samuel Thomas, Peter & Suzanne Lord, Helen Richards, Zara Walsh, Cynthia Giles, Charlotte Niemand, Kathleen Shurcliff, Ingrid Hutzler, David Houghton, E. Brinded, Heather Lyttle, Delight Gartlein, Wally Rogers, Richard & Suzanne Schofield, B.J. & R.E. Patchett, Mark Fairhurst, Kay Rodbard, Brenda Oldfield, Michael Orchard, Kelvin Hunt, Christine Grove, Cynthia Roberts,

Alison Beath, Rachel Johnston, Jonathon Baily, Barbara Anglem, Jason Hamill, Richard Cave. Overseas: Harry Battam.

Thank you to the following members for their donations to the society's activities:

Lynda Logan, Mary Powlesland, C.J. Foreman, N.D. Mc Kerchar, R.J. Meadows, P. Jean Crighton, G.W. Wells, Janet McCallum, Mia Colberts, R. & A. Schuckard, Lois Wagener, Mona I Taylor, Jim Jolly, Delight Gartlein & Wally Rogers, G.I. Hunt, Nikki McArthur, Elizabeth (Biz) Bell, W.A. Watters, Betty Seddon, Paul Gasson, Stephen Sharp, John Bottomley, Margaret Bishop, G.L. Don (Bio researchers), Richard Cave.

**HAZEL HARTY**  
Membership Secretary

## Birding-NZ

Late last year a new email newsgroup was launched for the distribution of information regarding birding and birds in New Zealand. It's primary purpose is to enable birders to immediately broadcast rare/unusual bird sightings to other interested birders. However, relevant information on birding, birding locations, and birds in New Zealand is also a function of the group. Group email addresses follow:

Post message:  
[BIRDING-NZ@yahoogroups.com](mailto: BIRDING-NZ@yahoogroups.com)  
Subscribe:  
[BIRDING-NZ-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto: BIRDING-NZ-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)  
Unsubscribe:  
[BIRDING-NZ-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto: BIRDING-NZ-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com)  
List owner:  
[BIRDING-NZ-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto: BIRDING-NZ-owner@yahoogroups.com)

**BRENT STEPHENSON**

## Pigeon and Kingfisher close calls

In September 1996, a New Zealand Pigeon landed on the rail of our deck, here about three metres wide. Our cat, a grey speyed female, approached and standing on her hind-legs reached to within 35 mm of the pigeon. The pigeon looked down inquisitively. These 35 mm saved the pigeon which flew away after about five minutes.

On 6 February 2000 a New Zealand Kingfisher bumped against the glass window. The same cat pinned the bird to the floor but then stood back, as if in deference to the bird's formidable bill. The kingfisher took the opportunity to fly away.

It is a poor lookout for pigeons if they cannot yet recognise a cat as a potential predator, and for kingfishers if they cannot distinguish a vertical pane of glass from a sheet of water. The cat had previously gone berserk when a pigeon landed on the perspex roof above it.

**JOHN GIBB**

# Quail Island Restoration Project



## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### Northland

With no meeting in December and January it has been fairly quiet in the Whangarei region, apart from the December and January west and east coast beach patrols and banding of Black-backed Gull chicks. Our first meeting of the year was on 14 February.

24 regulars participate in the beach patrols on the east and west coasts. The east coast patrols over the past six months have covered a total of 183.5 km for a total of 185 birds. Two of special interest were a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross and a White-capped Mollymawk. During the period July to December 2001 the predominant birds found were Australasian Gannet, Fluttering Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater and Blue Penguin.

Black-backed Gull chicks were banded on 22 December at the Waipu oxidation ponds area, amongst the gorse and pampas. Lorna, Prue, Claire, Marie, and Pauline said it was a very hot, sticky and dirty job in a very sheltered area. They managed to band 54 under trying conditions.

For the past year seabird identification workshops have been facilitated in Whangarei by David Crockett at Lorna Simpkin's spacious garage. We are grateful to Lorna for providing the venue and for storing the specimens in a dedicated freezer. The workshops, regularly attended by six to eight members, focus on beach wrecks collected during monthly beach patrols at Dargaville on the west coast and from Bream Bay and other east coast beaches.

Desiccated specimens are examined using standard measurements, sturnum characteristics and distinctive wing and plumage features to achieve an accurate outcome. Identification is confirmed for beach patrol cards, especially for the subtropical and tropical species of the Cookilaria and gadfly members of the petrel group. Unusual and rare specimens are forwarded to Alan Tennyson, at Te Papa, for identification. These workshops provide members with opportunities to share their combined knowledge and experience, to learn hands-on skills and to apply details and diagnostic features from the New Zealand field guide, HANZAB and a variety of other texts. And plentiful supplies of disposable gloves and air freshener are integral prerequisites for a seabird identification workshop!

(JANET SNELL)

### Auckland

December's meeting had a Christmas theme. Nigel Adams used slides to give us a migratory bird's eye view of the Holy Land, traversing from south to north with stops along the way, nicely mixed with pictures of the birds which use this important route. The spectacular hawk passage is a special feature. For added interest, we were treated to close-up shots of some of the desert animals of Mt Sinai. RR David Pye then tested our mettle with an ornithological quiz. Questions such as "What is NZ's most famous musical group named after a bird?" and "What is the most numerous species of shag in NZ?" kept the brains ticking over.

The very wet spring may have helped some species. Garden birds have no shortage of food - the resident blackbirds of one Orakei garden raised three successive broods between October and January. Once vacated, the last of these nests was gathered for Auckland's Museum collection. Sparrows have recovered locally following the big drop in numbers, which had been reported as being due to a salmonella infection. Monitoring of waders continues as usual. 180 adults and 104 chicks were counted at the Caspian Tern colony on Rat Island in the Kaipara Harbour.

Perfect weather accompanied our annual summer picnic held on January 22. This year we went to Little Shoal Bay at the north-western end of Auckland harbour bridge. As it was low tide we walked round the bay for a short distance, then explored Le Roy's Bush which extends around the back of the bay. 23 of us enjoyed a very pleasant evening, recording a total of 18 species.

February was the first evening meeting for 2002. As usual it consisted of the regional AGM followed by short talks from members and friends. This year the talks were by David Pye on the Wildlife Act, by Danielle Shanahan and Richard Cave (the DoC wardens at Papakanui Spit) on their trials of artificial shelters for Fairy Tern chicks and by Mike Graham on his recent trip to Tasmania. Danielle and Richard showed an interesting set of slides detailing how they placed short lengths of plastic pipe near Fairy Tern nests to see if chicks would shelter in them and thus receive

Native birdlife is set to make a comeback on Quail Island in Lyttelton Harbour as part of the restoration project for native flora and fauna. The Canterbury region has been involved, with Regional Rep Nick Allen carrying out bird counts which will provide good material for comparisons as the project proceeds.

There is now a list of 19 native birds which are found on the island, including nine that may be breeding. A proposed list of species suitable for reintroduction includes Tui, Fernbird, South Island Robin, Yellowhead, and South Island Saddleback.

University technical officer Mike Bowie spoke to an evening meeting last year about progress on the Otamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust project. He had been asked to do a study on invertebrates on the island.

The idea of the trust, formed in 1998, was to use Quail Island as a "lifeboat" by restoring indigenous flora and fauna, the same as had been done on Somes Island in Wellington, and Tiritiri Matangi near Auckland (and see the item about Limestaone - Matakohe Is in the September issue). At the same time, the project has to recognise the island's historical sites and values, with its former leper colony, and its links with the Scott and Shackleton Antarctic expeditions. It is designated a recreational reserve.

Stoats and ferrets have been eradicated - though reinvasion across the mudflats from Moekuku Point is a continuing threat. Now the challenge is to rid the island of rats, mice, and hedgehogs. DoC did some replanting in the 1980s but little remains because up to 95% of the plants were eaten by rabbits. "They didn't do the restoration in the right order," said Mike. At present only six rabbits or fewer remain on the island.

Probably the most important birds using the island at present are White-flipped Penguins. New nesting boxes have been installed, and Mike says penguin activity has been noted in the area. Chris Challies says there are at least five pairs breeding on the northern corner of the island.

To make the project work for birds, the island will need fresh flowing water (supplied through a pipe from Lyttelton, because there is no fresh water on the island), supplementary feeding stations, predator-proof nesting boxes for some species (particularly Saddlebacks and Yellowheads), and predator monitoring and control.

The island is already home to lizards, and more species may be introduced. Five hundred different species of invertebrates have been found. Many that have not yet been identified. Without any mature forest, there are no habitats for some of the species. Beetles need logs to live under, and Mike is experimenting with discs of *macrocarpa* and pine which can be laid on the ground as ready-made habitats. He is also using "weta motels" to encourage invertebrate life. The occupancy of the Quail Island motels is well down in comparison with others around the region.

Hedgehogs, known to be a problem for lizards, insects, and nesting birds, are being tackled with traps baited with peanut butter.

Restoring the island is an expensive process, but it is hoped to have the 30 hectares replanted over the next 10 to 15 years. Reintroduction of the animal life will proceed carefully in the hope that none of the introduced creatures upset the balance. It is possible that sometime in the future, Quail Island - fully restored and packed with interesting plant and animal life - could be receiving fee-paying visitors.

DAVID CLARKSON





extra protection from bad weather and aerial predators. The initial answer seems to be yes, but more research is needed.

(MICHAEL TAYLOR, CHRIS THOMPSON & DAVID PYE)

## South Auckland

The South Auckland region is now into gear for the new year with the Annual Meeting held on 12 February. The regional representative presented his report and the balance sheet which were duly adopted. The meeting was noticeable for the absence of members who all kept away in case there was a chance of being allocated a duty. In the absence of any better offers the RR was forced to retain his position for another year.

With those duties out of the way, we then saw a number of slides of birds in Fiji taken by John Brown many, many years ago. We also saw a series of slides taken by the wardens at Papakanui Spit in the Kaipara Harbour relating to the use of artificial shelter tunnels - an exciting concept that is clearly worthy of further study. We then examined a smelly mixture of Hutton's and Fluttering Shearwaters to determine the differences between them from a beach patrol perspective.

Following the excitement of the Ruff at Miranda and the Common Sandpiper at the Mangere sewage ponds, we have been a little short on exciting waders lately especially compared with Lake Ellesmere!! However there is a good smattering of smaller waders at both the Manukau Harbour and the Firth of Thames.

Perhaps the best of the overwintering birds is a Broad-billed Sandpiper on the shores of the southern Manukau Harbour. Without David Medway being present to chase the bird away (as he did in November) we were able to get a good sighting and the record has now been accepted by the Rare Birds Committee. It is of interest that in compiling that rare bird report that there has been a bird present in the Manukau Harbour in the summers of 1992, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2000 and now 2001 and at Miranda on the Firth of Thames in 1995. It is interesting to speculate that this may be the same bird and wouldn't it be great to be able to attach a band to its leg?

Another interesting sighting reported by new member Wim Houtman was of a harrier which has associated the sound of the hay mower to some tasty meals. It was noticed throughout the summer that when a haymaking contractor started the mower on the paddocks in the area around his

property, a hawk would soon hover overhead and swoop on any tasty morsels flushed as the mower proceeded.

The Black-billed Gull banding programme has now been completed for this year with a total of 70 chicks being banded in the Manukau Harbour and nine at Papakanui Spit in the Kaipara Harbour. It is interesting that this year was the first in which we have recorded birds re-nesting after earlier failures. This is something that would require further study in coming years. The colony at the mouth of the Waihou River in the Firth of Thames was washed out just as the eggs were hatching and this has resulted in the relatively low number of chicks banded this season.

(DAVID LAWRIE)

## Waikato

By the time you read this, the nights will be dark and the chill will be settling gently over the land at dusk. So it's time to take you back to summer, with its warm dry (ha!) days and Arctic migrant visitors on the wing. But enough of lyricism, let's get to the birds!

December's pot luck dinner at the always-welcome DoC rooms finished 2001 off officially, with the annual bird quiz won by Martin Day - well done chap! Sporadic bird records have been seeping in under my door ever since, and since we haven't reconvened for any meetings or field trips until now, these sightings will have to suffice for the Roundup:

Shags have been multiplying recently in the Waikato. Little Shags had 19 nests this season near Ohaupo, Pied Shags had 11 nests at Lake Hakanoa, Huntly, and Little Black Shags had four nests at Te Aroha. To round out the shag report, a Black Shag was seen swimming with its wings outstretched. It folded them, and after several minutes, dived, caught a fish, and flew off. Perhaps it was road-testing its new feathers? Spotless Crakes have been heard or sighted in 13 locations throughout the southern Waikato. A possible Black-backed Magpie was seen at the Ferrybank by the roving Lloyd Esler in December.

Our first speaker for the year was the formidably-talented Ralph Powlesland, who gave a smashing smorgasbord slide show depicting his various projects around the countryside, including Kaka and Kereru survival in Whirinaki Forest, his work with shags in Wellington and Makara, plus a quick flit through Chile. Thanks Ralph very much!

The first atlas square-targeted field trip of the year followed, with five people dividing up in to two teams. Large tracts of Te Aroha real estate were carved up looking for birds. Highlights were Bellbirds in the Kaimais, and 11 NZ Robins heard or seen before the first stream crossing on the Rapurapu Stream track, off the Tauranga Highway. Other birds were Kereru, Tui, Whitehead, Tomtit.

At the Howarth Wetlands in Te Aroha, three species of shag, including the breeding Little Black Shags above, plus a distant Australasian Bittern, were seen. Species with which UBRs have been filed have been: Nankeen Kestrel near Te Kuiti late last year, a Common/Arctic Tern at Raglan in December, and a White-browed Woodswallow at Rukuhia in February. These are not confirmed records.

There has been a plethora of reports of odd birds around the areas as you can see, and we are deeply indebted to Stella and John Rowe for completely covering a remarkable percentage of atlas squares. With no regular field trips scheduled for this year, OSNZ Waikato have planned an all-out assault in 2002, by using a technique called 'filling in the gaps', looking at areas not already covered in the particular season, or at all, and embarking on quick-fire days or weekends to those areas. It is hoped that other areas might do the same.

(PAUL CUMING)

## Taranaki

At the October meeting, slides were shown of the Fairy Martins which were seen at the Pungareere Stream. Sightings at the time from the region included five New Zealand Dotterels, a brood of 11 Paradise Ducklings, Little Black Shags nesting in pines in Pukekura Park and Chaffinches taking nectar from a hole pecked into the base of kowhai flowers. By November the Pukekura Park shags had nine nests, and 17 young birds were seen. In November two members gave an interesting and entertaining report of their trip to Alaska.

Beach patrol finds included a Thin-billed Prion in October and a Sooty Shearwater banded in 1982 as a chick in the Snares in November. Beach patrolling has been variable, with the January patrol covering 21.3 km for only one Short-tailed Shearwater.



**TRAVEL SMART**  
Taking you further



**JOHN'S  
SMALL GROUP TOURS**

**Calling all nature lovers!** Join me on an exclusive 8 day small group tour to this unique World Heritage Site, departing 29<sup>th</sup> September 2002. Become intimately acquainted with this special place in the company of Ian Hutton - renowned naturalist, biologist & author.

**LORD HOWE ISLAND**  
**\$2950**  
(per person share twin)

**Package includes:** Return airfares to Lord Howe Island ex Auckland, 7 nights twin share accommodation, 7 dinners, 1 BBQ lunch, daily guiding, interpretive services, and expert talks by Ian Hutton, 3 cruises, transfers and transport connections, **free book:** Birds of Lord Howe Island. **Special conditions apply.**

**NUMBERS ARE LIMITED SO CALL JOHN DOBBS NOW ON  
(06) 834 0669**

**TRAVEL SMART NAPIER** - Phone: (06) 834 0669,  
Fax: (06) 834 0671  
P.O. Box 424 Napier, Email: [travelsmart@tsnapier.co.nz](mailto:travelsmart@tsnapier.co.nz)  
A division of John Ferguson Travel Ltd.

The field trip to Awahou Reserve, south of Whangamomona, in October, produced numerous Whiteheads and NZ Robins. In November we went to the Rerekapa Track in inland Taranaki, recording 22 species, with 25 along the Mokau River in December.

Recent sightings include visits by a Whimbrel, Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit and a Pacific Golden Plover in November at Pungareere, and by December the NZ Dotterels were breeding, though a Black-fronted Dotterel nest had gone. Waiongana birds included a Reef Heron, knot, godwit, Banded Dotterel, Caspian Tern, Royal Spoonbill, and stilts. A lone Asiatic Whimbrel has been around the Rohutu area. Lake Rotokare had its first ever coot sighting.

(ROSEMARY MESSENGER)

## Manawatu

It has been another interesting summer in the Manawatu region, with most attention focussed, as usual, on the Manawatu Estuary. In much the same way as last summer our common species have been represented by numbers which are historically consistent – up to 300 Red Knots (including both Victorian- and Queensland-flagged birds) and 400+ Bar-tailed Godwits (also with flagged birds from Victoria and Western Australia) – and the less common, but expected, species have been down in numbers, with only 13 Pacific Golden Plovers, no Pectoral Sandpipers, only two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, one Curlew Sandpiper and three Turnstones.

As always, though, the estuary has come up with some first class rarities and a return showing of some species that have not been seen here for some considerable time – an Asiatic Whimbrel, and two Far Eastern Curlews, two Little Terns and especially a long-staying Terek Sandpiper have all evoked memories of former years.

A one-day Great Knot caused the Hawke's Bay RR to waste a few litres of diesel, and the greatest rarities of the summer were two Gull-billed Terns in January (only the second record of this species for the estuary). By my reckoning the Gull-bills brought the total number of species for the Foxton Beach area to 100 since the start of 2000.

(SAV SAVILLE)

## Wellington

Wellington members have had many opportunities recently for observation and hands-on experience. In November at the Manawatu Estuary we were treated to views of a Whimbrel, a Terek Sandpiper, a Little Tern, Turnstones and Royal Spoonbills.

A banding expedition to Onoke Spit with the Wairapapa branch processed 175 Black-backed Gull chicks and 25 of the 35 Caspian Tern chicks present – we ran out of bands for the latter. The unusually high number caused some excitement about "wetland of international importance" status for the spit!

On Mana Island, members' help in the supplementary feeding of Fairy Prions was successful, all birds maturing and going off to sea, hopefully to return in a couple of years. Some of us were able to assist in monitoring the transfer of Mohua / Yellowheads to Inner Chetwode Island in the Marlborough Sounds. Not as many of the released birds were seen as expected, however.

At the monthly meetings we have been fortunate to receive an update on the progress of two conservation projects. The first related to the New Zealand Dotterel. In December Ralph Powlesland reported on the nesting success of this species on Matakana Island, Bay of Plenty. After eight years of predator control, fencing, and public notices / pamphlets, hatching success has improved from 18% to 53%, and the number of fledglings from 5 to 33. The main cause of nest failure had been found to be flooding. However careful shifting of nests (together with their surroundings) had reduced this factor. Nowadays approximately one chick per adult fledges at managed sites. Those chicks that failed are suspected to have been taken by Black-backed Gulls.

Work with Brown Teal on Mana, Kapiti and Great Barrier Islands was the subject of Sue Moore's report in February. The population of this, our least-known endemic duck, is declining rapidly because of loss of habitat (through stock grazing to the water's edge) and increased predation.

On Great Barrier, domestic dogs are being trained to desist from attacking ducks, and 100 feral cats have been culled. On a video monitor recording, Sue showed us a rat at work. Of eight nests studied, two were abandoned, three were destroyed by predators, and one of the remaining three raised two ducklings from five eggs. Altogether 700 teal have been released here from captive breeding.

Breeding of Brown Teal on Kapiti was not good last year. There are some indications of interference by Weka and harriers. Three females from the 2000 release are still intact, but of 20 located at one site six months ago only 10 survived the first month. Progress seems to be better on Mana, where 11 chicks were hatched this season.

14 Brown Teal were liberated at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in November 2000. What may have been some of the sanctuary's Bellbirds however have been seen a mile away at Otari / Wilson Reserve, encouraging the belief that Wellington is at last succeeding in its campaign the "bring back the birds". For another instance, New Zealand Falcons have been frequently reported, especially in the western suburbs.

(ROD ORANGE)

## Nelson

Around 16 people participated with the OSNZ summer wader census between Farewell Spit and Nelson during the weekend of 16/17 February 2002. The count was highly successful and all the important wader areas were covered. Farewell Spit had 28,000 waders, of which 26% were endemic, Golden Bay had 7,000 waders, 80% endemic and Tasman Bay 12,000 waders, 54% endemic.

The most numerous species at Farewell Spit was about 6,500 S.I. Pied Oystercatchers, 80 Variable Oystercatchers, 700 Banded Dotterels, 13,500 Bar-tailed Godwits, 850 Turnstones and 6,250 Red Knots. Some highlights were two Hudsonian Godwits, a Grey Plover and 10 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Orange-flagged godwits and knots as well as a white-flagged knot were a part of the excitement.

Most numerous waders in Golden Bay were 5,500 Pied Oystercatchers, 50 Variable Oystercatchers and 900 Bar-tailed Godwits. In Tasman Bay there were about 5,500 Pied Oystercatchers, 300 Variable Oystercatchers, 250 Banded Dotterels, 4700 Bar-tailed Godwits, 200 Turnstones and 500 Red Knots. Also there was a yellow-flagged Knot at Motueka Sandspit, the first yellow flag in the top of the south.

(ROB SCHUCKARD)

## Canterbury

The elusive South Island Kokako declined its invitation to attend a Canterbury region field trip to the West Coast in April. Tapes of Kokako calls were played across the Granville State Forest and at Callaghan's Creek, both in the Grey Valley, but the only responses were believed to be from Tui. The suspicion is that the Tui have been hearing Kokako calls, and these two areas were visited because they have been of interest in the past, but the bird that the field guides list as "probably extinct" did not make an appearance.

Ron Nilsson had arranged the weekend trip, and arranged for one of his fellow leaders of the South Island Kokako Investigation Team, Rhys Buckingham, to attend. Seven members camped at Duffer's Creek in the Granville and enjoyed the bush birds in this beautiful forest: Tui, Bellbirds, Tomtits, Fantail, Grey Warblers, Moreporks calling all night, a Kaka calling, but no sign of the Weka that have raided the camp site on earlier trips.

It has been a very good year on Lake Ellesmere, and Canterbury members had plenty to see when they went to the lake for the annual Farewell to the Waders visit on 23 March. The star attraction was an Oriental Pratincole which has never been seen on the lake before this summer. Colin Hill had located it and many of the other birds of interest before members gathered at the Embankment Road area. The pratincole is not generally keen on humans coming within about 100 m, but when it took to the air it flew back and forth for several minutes in front of the line-up of birders, allowing excellent views of its chestnut wing linings.

Also present in the same area over summer were large numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers (up to 12 – a NZ record) and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (up to 30), two Little Whimbrels (together), a Black-tailed Godwit, and a possible Broad-billed Sandpiper. The wader roost at Southshore Spit had a Black-tailed Godwit on 1 March, and two Asiatic Whimbrels kept the regular two Eastern Curlews company on the Ashley Estuary until mid-March.

A beach patrol at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, found 28 juvenile Spotted Shags, and three adults, two White-flipped Blue Penguins, a Fairy Prion, and two Black-backed Gulls. Another patrol along a 4 km section of Brighton Beach found only a Spotted Shag, a Magpie, and a Sooty Shearwater.

Shelley Morgan reported the findings of her research into





the effects of domestic cats on the wildlife of Travis Swamp in November – the first such study in New Zealand. The cats were found to be preying mostly on small rodents, skinks, and introduced birds, and mostly didn't penetrate far into the wetland (max 130m), though the water-filled ditches dug to deter cats entering the area only worked to a limited extent. It was felt that neutering and a night-time curfew might reduce the cats' effects on the wetland.

The February presentation by John Warham took us to the tropical but – to humans – rather inhospitable Raine Island. The island is off the north-east portion of the Great Barrier Reef, has no fresh water, and is badly affected by tropical storms. However it is also heaven for anyone interested in seabirds, with large numbers of boobies, plus frigatebirds and tropicbirds. The presentation featured a cine film of the birds and the transport there – a sail-powered research vessel.

(DAVID CLARKSON/NICK ALLEN)

## Otago

Alan Baker picked up a dead Mottled Petrel on Hampden Beach in December. The bird is occasionally seen off the coast in Otago. Nearby, at St Kilda, half a dozen Arctic Skuas were harassing White-fronted Terns on a very windy day. A pair of NZ Falcons seem to be resident in the lower Taieri near the Taieri River walkway.

At Labour Weekend, 16 OSNZ members and friends gathered at Makarora, near the top of the Haast Pass, for an atlasing weekend. People gathered after lots of birding en route, variously via the Lindis Pass (no birds seen at all!), Cardrona and Tarras, with detours through the Rock and Pillar Range. The weather was exceptionally fine, mild and calm, with the lakes and mountains looking superb.

On Day One we divided up into four 4WD groups, crossed the Haast Pass and met up for at the Jacksons Bay diner for a fish lunch and watched dolphins in the bay. Two carloads went as far as the road would allow into the kiwi island sanctuary, developed for the preservation of the Waiatoto subspecies. Beech forest at Haast Pass rewarded everyone with the melodious song of Mohua and several clear sightings. Tui, Grey Warblers and calling Shining Cuckoos were common. The Blue Shag subspecies of the Spotted Shag was sighted at Jacksons Bay.

Next day parties divided up to survey closer to home, though one party went through the pass again and northward to Moeraki, with a reward of Fiordland Crested Penguins and Australasian Crested Grebe. Another group added Kea to the list near the pass, and Fantails which were surprisingly scarce.

The river flats downstream from Makarora produced nesting Black-fronted Terns and Banded Dotterels. On the Lake Hawea side of The Neck was a pair of crested grebes nesting among dead reeds in the shallows of a totally exposed location. Everyone called in on the way home next day, experiencing the special sight of the courting birds adding waterweeds to the mound. And a NZ Pipit gathering a beakful of insects and flying off with them across the bay.

A total of over 70 squares was covered for the mapping scheme, with Makarora topping the list with 38 species seen or heard (including Morepork). A cherry tree in the camp had over 20 NZ Pigeons feeding on fresh green leaves. Everyone, veterans and novices, was heartily satisfied.

Following their success in 2000, Australasian Crested Grebes returned to Lake Johnson near Queenstown in 2001, with up to 13 adults and a couple of juveniles as evidence of successful breeding. Lake Hayes also proved successful, with a maximum of 32 adults in April 2001 and up to 10 juveniles.

An immature grebe was sighted at the Karitane Estuary in late May. It overcame the problem of tidal movements by resting when necessary on strands of kelp caught by fishing buoys close to the wharf. It stayed in the area for at least a week.

Lesley Gowans had a Fernbird in her Saddle Hill garden in November, moving through various shrubs and seen in a rhododendron.

(MARY THOMPSON, GEORGE CHANCE AND HAMISH SPENCER)

## Southland

A visit to the shellbanks in the Invercargill Estuary on 14 November meant an interesting sloop through the mud to reach the Caspian Tern nesting area. We counted about 30 nests which had eggs or small chicks, although several well-advanced chicks were also present. The colony is surrounded by large numbers

of Black-backed Gull nests which is a concern. We also spotted a flock of about 250 knots and lots of godwits.

The first Californian Quails have made it onto the Southland map squares. A pair was seen on the roadside between Athol and Garston in November. Phil Rhodes also saw a male bird in the same area. A nesting Morepork was disturbed from a hole in a broadleaf overhanging the track at Seaward Bush on 28 November, and a Blackbird was reported feeding three Song Thrush fledglings.

Gannets have been seen far more regularly this summer along most stretches of Oreti Beach, and a flock of 16 plunging near the South entrance was a real highlight. This is not a common sight in Southland, as most birds are seen in twos and threes.

Beach patrols have continued on a regular basis, with most of Oreti Beach being covered each month. Nothing of great interest was found until a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross washed up between the South entrance and Sandy Point in January. We think this is the first for Oreti Beach, though Lloyd Esler came across one at Masons Bay on Stewart Is a few years ago.

An unusual pair of birds was reported from Riverton on 16 January, smaller than a Bellbird, with orange/mustard head and nape and uniformly dark green or brown body (none of the neighbours could agree). They had a strange call and were seen feeding on bottlebrush, kowhai and flax and were quite approachable. Our first thoughts were Bellbirds with pollen-covered heads, but the locals insist they are not Bellbirds. They didn't show for a photo shoot and may remain another unsolved mystery.

Lloyd has been feverishly working away on atlas forms and has announced that we are over two thirds through our squares which is quite an achievement for our small membership and large area. Our focus in the coming months is to visit the 127 that are left at least once.

We have been fortunate in having some very good speakers at our monthly meetings. Topics have included the Campbell Is rat eradication programme and the revegetation of Tiritiri Matangi Island.

(PHIL RHODES)

## What's On

### Northland

- 9 May - evening meeting
- 11 May, 8 June – Dargaville beach
- 13 May – evening meeting
- 14 May, 11 June – east coast beach patrol
- 25-26 May - tree planting, Kerikeri Island off Doves Bay.
- 15 June (or 22-23 June), tree planting, Motokawanui Island.
- 15 June – north Kaipara Harbour count.

### Wellington

- Beach patrols – phone Jean Luke (04) 293 5601.
- Evening meetings – first Monday of the month, DoC offices, Wellington City Library, 7.45 pm.
- 6 May – evening meeting, Wellington Branch AGM; Forbes Parakeet research.
- June – no meeting due Hokitika AGM.
- 1 July – evening meeting, species transfers to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Matiu / Somes Island surveys ph. Rod Orange (04) 473 1912
- Beach patrols ph. Jean Luke (04) 904 1704

### Canterbury

- 29 April - evening meeting, Spreydon Bowling Club, Domain Terrace. Green edge proposals for the Avon-Heathcote.
- 18 May - Banks Peninsula reserves survey. Ph. David Clarkson (03) 352 1448.
- 27 May - evening meeting, Hutton's Shearwaters.

### Otago

- 23 June - winter wader count. Ph. Ken Gager (03) 487 6670.
- 3 July - evening meeting, Cliffs Skeggs Gallery, Town Hall, Dunedin.
- 6 July - Science Festival field trip to Aramoana. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041.

### Southland

- Evening meetings in (conjunction with the Field Club) every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm. Venue varies. Ph. Phil Rhodes (03) 217 2757 or Lloyd Esler (03) 213 0404.
- Beach patrols most weekends. Ph. Phil or Lloyd.



