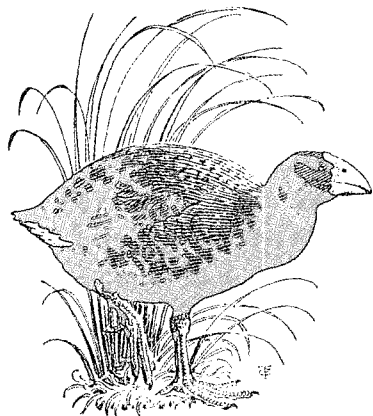


Southern Bird

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Quotation

"I hope you love birds too.
It is economical.
It saves going to heaven"

Emily Dickinson

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Cover Photos

Digital photography has come a long way from its inception. The cover photos are of a White-faced Heron, taken at Waikanae Estuary in November 2002, and White-fronted Terns on a floating log, Manawatu Estuary, in March 2003. Both photos were taken by Brent Stephenson, who uses a Canon D60, a 6.3 megapixel SLR, using a Canon f4 300 IS/L lens. Part of the beauty of digital, says Brent, is that "...I kept on clicking, not worrying about the amount of film I was using".

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
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
We welcome advertising enquiries.
Website: www.osnz.org.nz

Editorial

I have much pleasure in announcing that Nick Allen has agreed to take over as Editor of *Southern Bird*. Nick has become well-known to many in the Society as a first rate birder and an enthusiastic champion of society schemes and other projects. He has also been Canterbury's RR for a number of years. I sincerely hope that contributors will continue to provide him with the level of support which I have enjoyed as editor over the past nine years.

Nick's contact details for future issues of the magazine are:

Nick Allen
65 Allin Drive
Waikuku Beach
North Canterbury
Phone (03) 312 7183
Email: nick_allen@xtra.co.nz

The Society depends entirely on volunteer effort. This is a quite remarkable feature for an organisation of over 60 years of age. The Ornithological Society of New Zealand is however a completely different body from that of 60 years ago. This is not surprising – the world has changed inordinately in that time.

It seems obvious to me that ornithology itself has radically changed. When OSNZ began, birds in New Zealand were comparatively little known. Therefore any observation was likely to be a completely new chunk of knowledge – that is still the case of course, though the picture "grain", in photographic terms, has become much finer.

As a result professional ornithologists and birdwatchers formed a kind of continuum, and amateur ornithological contributions easily ranked alongside those of the professionals. Browsing early *Notornis* issues, I am struck by the basic level field ecology which dominates most papers.

Today's science (wherever it is heading in the future) has made immense advances compared with 60 years ago. Current ornithological papers are crammed with complex, specialist techniques, and professional ornithologists have to be as adept at the use of cutting edge technology, often way beyond the reach of non-specialists, as basic field craft.

We have also seen a sea change in conservation, with a completely new governmental and nongovernmental environment. The issues for preservation of our biodiversity meantime have never been more pressing.

So where does that leave OSNZ? Can we afford to remain a small organisation, maintained by volunteer effort? How do we cater for the professional scientist, as well as the emerging band of twitchers? We are unique among organisations that I know of in that we do not have a plan for the future of any kind – is this appropriate in 2003? It seems to me that with the proliferation of other bird-related organisations and activities that we cannot, above all, afford to be complacent, relying on our considerable but, I venture to suggest, diminishing stature.

OSNZ News started with Barrie Heather. Paul Sagar then competently guided it through some 13 years. I have overseen its transition to the colour magazine *Southern Bird*. Over time its contents have slowly changed. It is time for another hand to take it to the next stage. Meanwhile I intend to devote some of the time freed up by relinquishing the role of editor to assisting the task of searching for where OSNZ should go from here. I warmly welcome any contribution you may have to that endeavour.

TONY CROCKER



The Ornithological Society of New Zealand ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wanganui, Sunday 1 June 2003

Notice is hereby given that the sixty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Sunday, 1 June 2003 at the Wanganui RSA, 170 St Hill Street, Wanganui at 8 pm.

AGENDA

- Apologies.
- Confirmation of minutes of 2002 AGM.
- Reports of President and Treasurer and financial statements.
- Appointment of Auditor.
- Annual subscriptions - see notices of motion below.
- Constitutional alterations - see notices of motion below.
- Presentation of awards.
- General business.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Notice was given in *Southern Bird* in December 2002 that, under the provisions of the Constitution, the eight Council positions mentioned there would become vacant in 2003, and nominations were called for. Six nominations were received by the due date of 28 February 2003. Those nominations were for David Medway (President), David Crockett (North Island Vice-President), Elizabeth Bell (Secretary), Kerry-Jayne Wilson (Council), Ros Batcheler (Council), and David Lawrie (Council).

Therefore David Medway, David Crockett, Elizabeth Bell, Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Ros Batcheler and David Lawrie will automatically be re-elected or elected to Council in the positions mentioned for a three year term from the 2003 Annual General Meeting.

NOTICES OF MOTION

The following notices of motion have been received for consideration at the Annual General Meeting.

1. That the annual subscription payable by all classes of Membership paying subscriptions be increased by 15% from the financial year beginning on 1 January 2004 (Mark Nee/David Medway).
2. That the Constitution be altered
 - (i) By deleting Rule 8.1 therefrom and substituting the following Rule 8.1:

"8.1. The Society shall be administered by a Council consisting of not more than 10 Members

as Councillors, being a President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and not more than 7 other Councillors" (David Medway/David Lawrie on behalf of Council).

- (ii). By deleting the words "by a Vice-President, and in the absence of both" from Rule 15.2 (David Medway/David Lawrie on behalf of Council).

EXPLANATORY NOTE. It is considered that the original role of North Island and South Island Vice-Presidents - which was principally to ensure adequate liaison between Council and the Regional Representatives - is no longer relevant. The Vice-Presidents now have a very limited function in that respect. In recent years, communication between Council and the Regional Representatives has been greatly improved, notably because of the joint meetings which take place between them each year at the time of the Society's Annual General Meeting. Further, it is not considered necessary to retain a position of Vice-President at all because the President has the inherent power, inter alia, to delegate his/her responsibilities (other than those relating to the chairmanship of meetings, the position in respect of which is covered by Rule 15.2 of the Constitution) to another Councillor should the need to do so arise during the term of, for example, his/her temporary absence or illness. A Council which consists of "not more than 10 Members" as proposed is considered to be more appropriate and certain than one which consists of "no fewer than 11 Members" as at present.

3. That the Constitution be amended to alter the financial year sufficiently for the AGM to be held significantly earlier or later in the year (Lloyd Esler/Phil Rhodes).

EXPLANATORY NOTE. "We believe that the opportunity to observe local birds should be a major feature of the AGM weekend. For several years the AGM has been held at Queen's Birthday Weekend, a time of year when migrant species are absent, days are short and when weather conditions are more likely to disrupt excursions and travel to and from the AGM. A change to Easter or Labour Weekend, for example, would give more reliable travel and more daylight in which to socialise and watch birds".

David Medway
President.
16 March 2003.

BoP Bird Festival takes off

The inaugural Birds a Plenty Festival, held from 28 September to 6 October 2002, lived up to its name with participants in the varied programme viewing an amazing variety of birds.

Although bird festivals are a common feature overseas, particularly the United Kingdom and North America, it is believed to be the first of its kind in New Zealand and was inspired by the famous British Birdwatching Fair which takes place every year over the weekend before the August bank holiday. The festival aims to be an annual event and to educate children and the general public about New Zealand's birds.

It also aims eventually to encompass bird art and craft as well as the ambition to attract birdwatchers from overseas to the eastern Bay of Plenty. The area provides some of the best bird watching in New Zealand - particularly Ohiwa Harbour for waders, and Otamatuna, the mainland island in the northern Ureweras, for endangered bush birds such as Kokako and Kaka.

The week started with what is believed to be New Zealand's first bird rescue workshop. "We had 35 people from as far away as Great Barrier Island and Wellington", said the organiser Rosemary Tully. "There were representatives from SPCA, vets, DoC and Forest and Bird and we all learned so much from each other."

Dr Imber's session on petrels and a trip to Whale

Island was fully booked. The participants saw petrels, geckos, Saddlebacks and a Grey-faced Petrel chick.

Paul Jansen from the DoC Kakapo programme gave an interesting talk about the success of the Kakapo breeding last season, with 23 chicks fledging. After the talk the group went to Burma Road to listen for kiwi. Matt Cook, programme manager from Whakatane DoC, explained there has been intensive predator control in the Ohope Scenic Reserve in the last year. "There are eight kiwi in the reserve and we have just fledged our first kiwi chick this year. We moved it to Operation Nest Egg in Rotorua until it reached 800 grams and then released it into the reserve last autumn."

The trip to White Island yielded Pied Shag, Blue Penguin, Buller's Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Cape Pigeon, White-fronted Tern, Grey-faced Petrel, prions and gulls.

All the other activities were also a great success. Plans are now underway for next year's festival which will also be held over the last week of the school holidays. The theme being mooted is around wetlands and we hope to invite Fish and Game to participate. Also we were very lucky with the weather for the inaugural festival so next time plan to have wet day activities such as bird art and craft exhibitions.

NARENA OLLIVER

Chinstrap Penguin at KAIKOURA

On the morning of Friday 29 November I was lucky enough to go on the Oceanwings trip out of Kaikoura. The weather was cloudy, but not windy, and a reasonable selection of "to be expected" pelagic species was encountered, which made the trip very worthwhile for the variety of Spanish, Dutch, Australian, British and American tourists and birders on board.

At the end of the trip, as the boat was approaching the dock, a radio call from a departing whale-watching boat alerted us to the presence of "a penguin, quite big, and maybe a Yellow-eyed" on the boulders that make up the edge of South Harbour. The Oceanwings skipper, Gary Melville, hurried along to have a look and we were quickly able to find the bird, sitting on the top of the boulder pile, in full view, and at about 15m range.

A little swearing followed the immediate realisation that the bird was in fact an

adult Chinstrap Penguin, which, given the views that we had, was hardly a difficult identification task. It was apparently quite well (not emaciated, not oiled, and not moulting). Dave Jackson took several photographs of the bird from the boat, and then, after a few minutes we continued to land.

Unfortunately a couple of people then walked along the top of the boulder wall towards the bird. I'm not sure if they were looking for the bird or just strolling on the wharf, but they managed to scare the penguin off. It promptly hopped into the water, dived and was lost to sight. It was not seen again.

The record has been accepted by the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee and constitutes the third record for the New Zealand mainland (there also being two records for sub-Antarctic islands). Chinstrap Penguin is a most unlikely bird to reach New Zealand once, let alone five



times, since the vast majority of the world population breed on the "wrong" side of Antarctica, and there is only a tiny colony of about ten pairs at the Balleny Islands in the Ross Sea. The fact that the bird chose the harbour of the country's prime pelagic birding operation in preference to the hundreds of kilometres of wild rocky coastline that are either side is truly mind-boggling - but I am very glad that it did!

SAV SAVILLE



Australasian Ornithological Conference 2003

The second biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held at the Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, Australia from Wednesday 10 to Saturday 13 December 2003.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Birds Australia, with OSNZ, is committed to holding biennial conferences that provide a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian-based researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region.

Following the success of the inaugural AOC at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, in 2002, the second AOC will be held at the Australian National University, Canberra. The scientific programme spans three full days and features symposia, and discussion and poster sessions.

The organising committee has decided to plan for a no-frills conference, accessible to all. There will be high quality presentations in a professional venue, but participants will be expected to organise their own accommodation and lunches. The organisers will provide a list of on-and off-campus accommodation and eateries convenient to the venue and to suit all budgets. Morning and afternoon tea will be provided.

There will be a welcome mixer, optional conference dinner and post-conference excursions. A conference website is in preparation, based at the Birds Australia site, <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au>



To express your interest in the AOC 2003, go to the web at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/aoc or send this form to Dr Penny Olsen, School of Botany and Zoology, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Title: _____ Surname: _____

First Names: _____

Institutional affiliation: _____

Postal Address: _____

Country: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: () _____

Fax: () _____

☐ I would be interested in submitting a paper on

☐ I would be interested in organising and/or chairing a conference session on

☐ I would be interested in attending

☐ I would be interested in assisting with conference organisation

☐ I would be interested in contributing financial assistance for (e.g. student travel grant)

Please direct enquiries to:

Penny Olsen, School of Botany and Zoology, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200; penny.olsen@anu.edu.au
Denis Saunders, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, GPO Box 284, Canberra City ACT2601; denis.saunders@csiro.au

New Zealand contacts:

Kerry-Jayne Wilson Wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz
Paul Scofield pscofield@cantmus.govt.nz

DR PENNY OLSEN

Ph +61 (2) 6125 2536

Fax +61 (2) 6125 5573



OSNZ's nest record scheme

As many of you may know I have spent the last year using data from the OSNZ's nest record scheme to compare the breeding behaviour of introduced birds in NZ with that of natural populations in Britain. Whilst working on the project I have often mused on the usefulness of the nest record scheme and the great potential that it provides to birdwatchers, biologists and conservationists.

I was therefore delighted when I was asked to write this article to communicate the value of the nest record scheme. Whilst, I hope you find what follows stimulating I will only really be happy if it encourages you to find some nests and contribute to the world's oldest nest record scheme!

Many New Zealanders love team sports, no doubt partly due to the ethos that the team's performance is greater than the sum of the individual players – or at least it is when the team plays well. The same principal applies to the nest record scheme and indeed to all of the OSNZ's census work.

A single nest record card is, by itself, of limited value but when it is added to the existing database its value is greatly magnified, as comparisons can be made with other locations or time periods. It is because of the existing database and all of the other volunteers that contribute to the scheme that every nest record card is valuable.

Every member of the OSNZ has the power to make a useful contribution to our knowledge of birds in New Zealand, even if they only submit a few cards each year. Finding nests is always a pleasant experience that helps us to experience the wonders of nature, but that enjoyment is surely greater when we know that doing so helps us to understand and protect the natural world that we all adore.

So what types of comparisons can be made and why are these so important? The possibilities presented by the nest record scheme are infinite, but I will give a few examples to illustrate how nest record card schemes have contributed to scientific studies and conservation.

Throughout north-west Europe many species have undergone massive population declines; for example the corn bunting population has declined by 90% in just 25 years. Such changes are linked to increased intensification of the agricultural landscape. In order to reverse these declines conservationists need to know how and why they have occurred. This difficult task is greatly helped by the existence of a British nest record scheme.

Rather than doing experiments or collecting new data conservationists simply have to look for patterns in the existing data. The path to knowledge and thus conservation action is greatly shortened. Using the British nest record scheme scientists have been able to establish that breeding success for the corn bunting, yellowhammer and other declining species is higher in territories with a mix of arable and pasture farming¹.

These data, together with other information, have been used to successfully lobby the British government

to fund agri-environment schemes that promote the adoption of mixed farming. It is hoped that such a strategy will increase the breeding success of these declining species and help to reverse their population trend. A similar situation could exist in New Zealand, for example by investigating nest success of riverine birds breeding on rivers where water levels are managed sympathetically.

Nest record card schemes are also incredibly useful as they preserve accurate and unbiased information on the past. Policy makers often require more than memories of the past to be persuaded that things have changed.

One of the motivating forces behind agreements to cut emissions of gases that contribute to global warming was evidence that climate change is affecting wildlife. Nest record card schemes from the USA, Canada and Britain have provided concrete evidence that many bird species are now nesting earlier in the spring due to warmer temperatures^{2,3}. Moreover, this change in the timing of breeding could cause populations to decline if the timing of breeding is no longer synchronised with the time of maximum food availability as more chicks may starve².

This information helped to persuade governments that climate change was happening and could adversely affect bird populations. In a small way each nest record card helped to force governments and industry around the world to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Nest record card schemes can also help biologists explain intriguing phenomena in the natural world. Data on the frequency of parasitism by brood parasites, such as the Eurasian cuckoo, have been used to show that cuckoos discriminate between potential host species and select the ones that are the best parents for cuckoos.

Due to environmental change the species that provides the best care has changed over time and natural selection has been strong enough to force changes in the identity of host species in just 40 years⁴. The same data, obtained from nest record cards, also had an important conservation use as they were used, in conjunction with data on host species densities, to show that cuckoos were declining in Britain⁴.

Importantly, studies indicate that the results obtained from volunteer nest record schemes are essentially identical to those obtained by detailed studies conducted by professional biologists⁵. The recent initiative to computerise existing data and to automatically calculate important variables, such as breeding success and clutch size, mean that the potential for OSNZ's nest record scheme to inform conservation decisions has never been greater.

Due to the large number of existing cards each new nest record is a valuable addition to the database. There has never been a better time to contribute to the scheme, so whilst planning your activities over the next summer please set aside some time for nest finding. Remember, every single card is valuable.

KARL EVANS



OSNZ's nest record scheme

- ¹ Siriwardena, G.M., Crick, H.Q.P., Baillie, S.R. & Wilson, J.D. 2000. Agricultural habitat-type and the breeding performance of granivorous farmland birds in Britain. *Bird Study* 47: 66-81.
- ² Crick, H.Q.P. & Sparks, T.H. 1999. Climate change related to egg-laying trends. *Nature* 399: 423-424.
- ³ Dunn, P.O. & Winkler, D.W. 1999. Climate change has affected the breeding date of tree swallows throughout North America. *Proceedings of the Royal Society* 266: 2487-2490.
- ⁴ Brooke, M. & Davies, N.B. 1987. Recent changes in host usage by cuckoos in Britain. *Journal of Animal Ecology* 56: 873-883.
- ⁵ Rodrigues, M. & Crick, H.Q.P. 1997. The breeding biology of the chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* in Britain: a comparison of an intensive study with records of the BTO nest record scheme. *Bird Study* 44: 374-383.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Dr Karl Evans, not only for writing the above article but also for the fact not mentioned by him - that before he could analyse any of our nest record cards, he had to load them on to a computer. These data are now the foundation for the loading of all our nest record cards on to computer.

I shall also take this opportunity to enlighten those who have never seen one of our nest record cards by outlining some of the information collected on them which allows the conclusions reached by the analysts as referred to by Dr Evans.

Habitat. A selection can be made from 15 predetermined alternative types of habitat surrounding the nest location, e.g. exotic forest, estuary, rocky coast.

Site. 9 alternatives are offered to describe the habitat in which the nest has been constructed or a space to enter details more specific than those offered.

Dates are requested when known, for the first and last egg layings, for the hatching of first and last young, when the young leave the nest and counts of numbers of eggs, chicks and fledglings.

Space is also provided for the recording of date and time of each visit to the nest together with columns to

record the nest contents. A reminder here that at all times disturbance of the sitting birds must be minimal and the safety of the nest and contents is paramount. For obvious reasons the greater the number of observations made throughout the duration of nest building and occupancy, the greater the precision that allows long term changes or regional differences may be determined.

Two types of card format are in use for our scheme. Firstly as described above, using a separate card for the recording of each individual clutch raised and secondly, when a visit is made to a 'colonial' site and the details of the contents of many nests of a single species of bird can be recorded on one card.

I should be pleased to be contacted for a supply of cards and the set of instructions for their completion.

RUSSELL THOMAS
Convenor, Nest Record Scheme
Rangitane Road,
R.D.1 Kerikeri
Northland 0470
Tel./fax - 09 407 4426,
Email - rusnles@paradise.net.nz

J.S Watson Trust

Applications are invited from individuals or conservation groups for financial assistance for conservation projects over 2003-2004.

The criteria for assistance are:

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

A total of around \$20,000 is available for distribution. Individual applications should be limited to a maximum of \$4000.

One page preliminary application forms are available from:

J.S. Watson Trust
Forest & Bird
P.O. Box 631, Wellington
Attn Hayley Meehan
h.meehan@wn.forest-bird.org.nz

Nominations for Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award & Regional Representatives 2003

A reminder that nominations for the above awards close with the Hon. Secretary on 30 June 2003, and for RR nominations on 31 July 2003. Details and procedures are available from current RRs or the Hon Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. A full summary of OSNZ award procedures was published in OSNZ News 58 (March 1991).



ATLAS UPDATE

The main map records the distribution of squares surveyed with the number of sheets returned per square from some 15,740 data sheets returned to the Convenor by 31 December 2002, which have undergone initial processing. More than 1000 sheets have been received since then and are not included here. Though not mapped, we have records giving a good coverage from the Chatham Islands.

At this point we have achieved recording sheet coverage for 91% of the country. However, the total coverage map gives a good indication of areas where the effort has been high – some 11% of the country has 12+ sheets, while 44% of the country has two sheets or fewer (including the unsurveyed).

A useful challenge for the coming year will be to survey all the squares that have only an open circle on the map and turn them into solid dots, along with a major effort to get into the more remote and unsurveyed areas. The most popular square (65 sheets) continues to be in Wellington and contains the Karori sanctuary.

The aim of the atlas project is to have at least one record sheet from each square, once in each season during the term of the atlas project, and an extensive record of the habitat used

ary project, while the highest tally for a single sheet remains at 71 (containing records from Tiritiri Matangi Island sanctuary).

To date 522 individuals or groups (totalling 673 persons recorded on the sheets) have returned records. The greatest number from one individual is 1091 (Barry Hartley), while Nick Allen and Tadeusz Wnorowski are some 200 sheets behind. However, Tadeusz is well in the lead for individual species records with 28,832 (an average of 32 per sheet). So far 60 individuals/teams have returned 82% of the 302,000+ species records reported at an average of 19 per sheet.



Squares for which seasonal records have been received by 31 Dec 2002.

ATLAS UPDATE

NZ bird Atlas, coverage 1999-2002.

The aim of the atlas project is to have at least one record sheet from each square, once in each season during the term of the atlas project, and an extensive record of the habitat used. So far, 2889 squares of the country have one or more records, but you will see that the seasonal maps show that coverage is quite variable, though the effort (sheets returned and total species records) is relatively similar per season. The blank seasonal areas provide a challenge for all members to plan ahead in their ornithological travels, and for more populous regions who may think they have finished their areas, to assist their neighbours.

We are aware of a number of special atlas expeditions that have been organised to some of the more obvious blank spots, and the seasonal maps show the effects of some of these. Please ensure that you attend the AGM in 2003 to improve the coverage of the Manawatu and Wanganui districts (note the good winter coverage for the Hawkes Bay, Rotorua and Westland districts from the past three AGMs).

We are greatly indebted to Pasi Hyvonen, Wellington, for producing these maps from the base dataset being created by Derek Batcheler. From February 2003 Nicki Sinclair has been employed to enter the habitat and species records into the database using the entry software created by Ross Pickard. The first examples of progress maps using these data will be loaded on the website at www.bird.org.nz along with other coverage maps during April with the assistance of Brent Stephenson. Stuart Nicholson continues to assist with problem solving for errant records.

The Society gratefully thanks all those who have contributed so far. Please help us ensure that the last 18 months of the project are equally successful.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON

NUMBER OF SHEETS PER GRID

- 1
- 2-6
- 7-12
- 12+

New Zealand Firsts

I am compiling a list of historical "first" bird records for New Zealand. Usually, a first record will refer only to a country's vagrants, but I have included all New Zealand's birds in this list. I will eventually either publish or make available (via the internet) an annotated list, with a brief account of each species' discovery. As far as I know, no country has a published list of first historical records for its entire avifauna.

First records are of interest in understanding how and why a species came to be found, in identifying historical patterns of discovery, and in clarifying how perceptions of a species change over time. I feel they are also of value in broadening the appeal of birds to a wider community. Many people are intrigued by the details of a bird's first occurrence.

First records are also part of the ornithological literature. James Fisher, in 1966, wrote a chapter in *The Shell Bird Book* entitled "The Naming of the Birds". This dealt with the discovery of British birds since written records began. One of the more popular recent bird books published in Britain has been *First for Britain and Ireland 1600-1999* by Phil Palmer, detailing first bird records of rarer British birds.

Several papers have been published on the bird discoveries of Cook's voyages by Medway. Fleming (1982) detailed the discovery of many species in *George Edward Lodge- unpublished New Zealand bird paintings*. Andrews (1986) also described zoological discovery in New Zealand between 1769-1900 in *The Southern Ark*. Most species accounts in *Notornis* also include discovery and historical details (eg. Pukeko 16:101-120 and White-faced Heron 17:3-24). New Zealand Checklists usually include the first record and published reference of a vagrant (108 species details in the 1990 Checklist).

I have defined the New Zealand region according to the 1990 Checklist, with the exclusion of the Ross Dependency. Every species recorded at Ross, except for Snow Petrel, has also been recorded in the New Zealand region.

There are difficulties in defining some first records. Is a first record when a species is first collected or sighted, or first named, or first distinguished (from a similar species), or first accepted onto a national list (in the case of introduced species)? Most often, it is when a species is first recorded. However, there are some anomalies. A species may be collected, but not named for many years. The Campbell Island Teal was collected in 1886, but not named until 1935.

A species may also be confused with another, similar species. The Southern Buller's Albatross was not separated from the Grey-headed Albatross until 1893. The Grey-headed Albatross was itself referred to as the Yellow-nosed Albatross before other albatross species were recognised.

A species may be eventually recognised as different, but not accepted as such by other authorities. The Northern Giant Petrel was distinguished from the Southern Giant Petrel in 1912, but not accepted as even a different taxon until 1966, when Bourne & Warham outlined the case for it being a separate species. Even so, it was not until 1979 that it was accepted as such. The first speci-

mens came from the Chathams in 1890. So which of these dates is the "first" record?

For most species, I have taken the date of discovery as the first record. However, for some species, such as the albatrosses and Northern Giant Petrel, while we have first records of sightings or specimens, they were not recognised scientifically as such at the time. I feel it is useful to have a first "accession" record for such species, taking priority over any other historical record. The accession record is the date when they were scientifically recognised as distinct from their congeners. This maintains the list integrity, as to include a species many years before it is recognised gives a misleading impression of the patterns of discovery in a "first" list. This distinction applies to only 25 or 7% of New Zealand species. I have bracketed first historical records after the first accession records in these cases in the provisional list.

Furthermore, if a first record after the 18th century is named within c5 years of its discovery, I have taken the field discovery date as the first record, as clearly the bird has been recognised as something new. For 18th century records, the discovery date is the first record, as the Linnean system was still in its infancy during this period.

For some species, further research may reveal the first record as being earlier than once thought. A good example would be the Red-necked Stint, clearly first recorded in 1866 rather than 1902 (Sibson, *Notornis* 26:120). In these cases, where the species had already been named, amending the first recorded date is historically accurate. The Welcome Swallow now has been recorded from the 1920s, preceding a 1943 record, and further research may unearth even earlier records.

First records should, of course, stand up to re-examination, and meet present day standards of record verification. Whether every first record on the New Zealand list meets these standards is open to debate. Doubts have been expressed about species such as Common Noddy (19th century specimens unable to be verified) and Channel-billed Cuckoo (provenance of 1924 specimen unknown). Even seemingly good first records such as Buller's Arctic Skua of 1864 may have been misidentified (Melville, *Notornis* 32:68). Some widespread species have also been first recorded without supporting details. Should these be regarded as first records, even though common and easily identifiable?

The question of the first record of an introduced species is also debatable. I have taken the view that the first successful introduction of a species is the first record. However, this is only apparent in retrospect, when the introduction is known to be self-maintaining. Other methods could be the first-ever known introduction date, the first known breeding date, or the date of publication in a checklist, but the first successful introduction date seems as good as any.

Since 1820, an average of 33 species has been added every twenty years to the NZ list, with the period 1860-1879 adding the highest total of 62 species (this, however, included 20 introduced species). Since 1940, 98 species have been added to the New Zealand list (including 7



introductions); about 3 "firsts" every 2 years. The best localities for "firsts" since 1940 were Manukau Harbour (7), Firth of Thames (6) and L. Ellesmere and the Manawatu Estuary (4 each). The best provinces were Canterbury (11), Northland (8), and Auckland and Manawatu (7 each).

I hope that this article will prompt some discussion. I would also like any clarification that will make this "firsts" list as accurate as possible regarding dates and places for

each species, before I begin writing up the list. Most of my references are from Gray (1862; *Ibis* 1: 214-252), Oliver (1955) and *Notornis*. The list, with some annotations, is available by e-mailing me at the e-mail address george.watola@virgin.net. Any assistance with corrections, amendments and references would be greatly appreciated.

GEORGE WATOLA

Oamaru Penguin Symposium

The 4th Oamaru Penguin Symposium will be held on 19 & 20 June, 2003. Focus will be upon the following themes,

Rehabilitation centres and programmes - their economic success and role in penguin population well-being.

Predator management in and around penguin colonies, eg, pro-active or re-active response?

Conservation issues for penguins of our greater region.

New Zealand crested penguins - biology, populations and changes.

However, papers pertaining to all aspects of New Zealand and Australian penguin biology will be considered. The Conference programme will be designed to facilitate visits to both the Oamaru blue penguin facility and the nearby yellow-eyed penguin colony.

Registration is NZ\$70 per person. Late registration - that is, after 2 June - will attract a NZ\$10 penalty

Presentation - In order to facilitate programme planning,

notice of intent to submit a paper at the meeting will be required. It would be appreciated if that could be with the Convenor by 20 April, 2003. Abstracts are requested for 5 May and cannot be accepted, after 19 May.

Forms - Registration and abstract forms for completion and accommodation information are available at <http://www.penguin.net.nz/ops/ops2003.html> They may be down loaded or obtained directly from the convenor. Accompanied by the appropriate fees, they should be sent to the convenor, to whom all enquiries should be directed.

A.G. HOCKING

"East Riding", 223, Whiterocks Road,

RD 6-D Oamaru. New Zealand.

Tel: 03) 434 8188 E-mail: agh@ihug.co.nz

Reviews

Veitch, C.R. & Clout, M. (eds). *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species. Proceedings of the International Conference on the Eradication of Invasive Species, Occasional paper of IUCN Species Survival Commission No 27.*

This is not a bird book as such but it is an important contribution for those interested in island habitat conservation. It covers a large number of eradications of invasive species, and while the majority relate to mammals, it is good to see that a start is being made on plant and invertebrate invasives. It is also good to see that the work of removing invasives, which was spearheaded in New Zealand, is now being taken up throughout the world.

The conference had a very positive and confident attitude and this is reflected in the papers presented, from the keynote address by Dan Simberloff down through all contributors. The papers covered various techniques of eradication, as well as the planning, the importance of quarantine procedures, and the reasons

why some programmes have failed. There are 52 papers and a further 21 abstracts, about one third of which relate to New Zealand situations.

This book will be essential reading for island managers and anyone interested in preserving biodiversity. It is available from IUCN Publications Series Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB 3 0 DL, United Kingdom. E-mail books@iucn.org Original price was NZ \$55 (plus P and P)

BRIAN BELL

Medway, David G. *Sea and shore birds of New Zealand. Illustrated by the author. 2002, Reed New Zealand Nature Series, Auckland. ISBN 0 7900 0842 4, 100 pp, soft cover, \$16.99.*

This small book, which gives excellent value for the price charged, comprises a description of 50 sea and shore birds, mainly of common species, but also including some rare ones. Each bird has notes on identification and dimensions; distribution and habitat; behaviour and food;

and breeding. The many photographs, at least two for each bird, are generally clear and the colours true to life.

Most of the species described have two or three photographs each, and in addition several of the birds are shown in groups in flight or resting. A few of the photographs, for example those of the Black-fronted Tern, are not especially typical, while for the Spotted Shag, only immature birds are illustrated. One of the two photographs of the Blue Penguin is of a rare albino bird.

At 12 x 18 cm the book will fit well into a jacket or parka pocket for field use. It is likely to be handy as an identification guide, particularly when used also at home in conjunction with the standard *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.

Inevitably there will be some disagreement over the choice of birds described. Personally, I would have preferred the author to have included, for example, the Sooty Shearwater and the Yellow-eyed Penguin, instead of two or three of the rare waders described. This, however, is a minor quibble on what is a well produced and informative little book.

BILL WATTERS

Barter, M A, 2002. *Shorebirds of the Yellow Sea: Importance, Threats and Conservation Status Wetlands International Global Series 9, International Wader Studies 12, Canberra, Australia. ISBN90 5882 009 2 104 pp. Soft cover.*

The author in the foreword to this publication effectively sums up the reasons for the work and its relevance for the future in the following: "I decided to write this monograph because I believe it is very important to tell the story of the seemingly countless

shorebirds of the Yellow Sea and the very serious threats to the habitats they use. I hope that the documented information provided in this monograph will lead to better informed policy and decision making by Governments and provide conservationists with the necessary data to press Governments to take effective action to protect the shorebirds and their habitats". The importance of the Yellow Sea to New Zealand and its shorebirds is now becoming more apparent with the frequent sightings of New Zealand flagged birds in that area and now birds that were flagged in the Yellow Sea being seen in New Zealand. This work is therefore of importance to New Zealand and its decision-makers, as it is almost certain that nearly all of our shorebirds pass through the Yellow Sea at least on the northward migration.

To ensure the long-term survival of the shorebirds which visit New Zealand, it is therefore necessary to understand the Yellow Sea and the threats, and for the New Zealand Government and concerned conservationists to ensure that action is taken to reduce any future threats.

This monograph is however more than a political statement. It also provides mind-numbing thoughts for a wader-watcher such as myself to try to visualise the vast flocks that Mark has seen and counted. It is therefore an interesting read for this fact alone. The work however does not attempt to provide the answers, it only provides the background to the many questions that still remain to be answered.

The challenge now is for the international community to work off the platform which has been set in this monograph to ensure the long term survival of the birds which utilise the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

DAVID LAWRIE

Outdoor activities have included our customary summer wader surveys and west coast beach patrols. December's search of Muriwai by Simon Chamberlin and John Simmons turned up a rare vagrant – a brown-phased Oriental Cuckoo, the remains of which are a useful addition to the Museum collection. The annual picnic was held on a perfect summer's evening at Chelsea Sugar Works. The variety of habitat – coastal, pond and bush – yielded over 30 species.

The February meeting was scheduled to be Graham Saunders speaking on 'Birding in Ireland'. Graham arrived from the UK the day before the meeting. Unfortunately his luggage (including slides) decided to take a later flight. Hasty phone calls around the membership produced a video of an owl sanctuary. As the meeting was starting it was discovered that the video machine did not work. 'Plan C' saw Mel Galbraith very kindly volunteering to dash home and return with what turned out to be a magnificent sets of slides from his recent expedition monitoring Kakapo on Codfish Island.

February also saw the final meeting for David Pye as Regional Representative. Many thanks to David for all his hard work on behalf of the region and on behalf of OSNZ. We hope to still see you around!

(MICHAEL TAYLOR & CHRIS THOMPSON)

South Auckland

Organised activities for this region for the 2002 year concluded with a barbecue at the RR's house in December. Unfortunately the weather gods decided that Tony Habraken had been involved in organising the date and it rained most of the day. However being a resourceful chap the RR had already cleaned the basement on the off-chance of rain and the festivities were able to proceed albeit in slightly cramped conditions.

The 2003 year formally commenced with a meeting in February at which the annual meeting procedure was completed with the adoption of the RR's report and financial statements. This was kept brief so that we could hear Dr Graham Saunders who spoke to us on some interesting observations of birding in Ireland and the UK.



REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Auckland

2002 marked the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Auckland Museum. At our December meeting Dr Brian Gill, Curator of Land Vertebrates since 1982, traced the history of the museum from its Symonds Street origin to the present phase of expansion on the Domain site, with special reference to the bird displays and collections, which now hold about 12,000 specimens.

Brian's notable predecessors include Sir Robert Falla and Graham Turbott, prior to the sojourns of Ross McKenzie (4 years) and Sylvia Reed (9 years) as Associate Ornithologist. The variety of the collection and its sources was illustrated by slides of selected objects; among these were the moa eggshell found by Walter Mantell in 1847; a Blue-crowned Lorikeet collected in Samoa by the Wesleyan missionary Rev. Geo. Brown ca.1876; a Red-bellied Pitta obtained in 1875 by the Italian explorer Odouardo Beccari in western New Guinea; and a tray of American birds collected by former U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt.

Michael Taylor then spoke about his work as a museum volunteer on the 19th century British egg collections that he has been sorting, cleaning and registering. Surviving field notes bring matters to life. Thus "Jackdaw, May 10th, 1891; A nest in a chalk-pit contained 2 eggs. These were obtained by reaching with a cane to which a spoon had been fixed. I had rather a nasty tumble, sliding on my back for thirty feet; it is so difficult to return from a most easy ascent with a whole skin, which I failed to do".

This being our Christmas gathering, RR David Pye tried our wits with a 20 question quiz. Sample questions – What bird appears on the \$100 note? Cite some NZ sports teams which bear the name of a bird? From which harbour was the type specimen of the Wrybill obtained? And which way does its bill turn? From this 'ordeal' we gladly adjourned to the usual B-a-P feast.



Tony Habraken has been busy over the January period with the region's Black-billed Gull banding programme. He and his team have banded over 450 chicks from the two local colonies, one in the Firth of Thames and the other in the Manukau Harbour. He has used the banding exercises as good opportunities to introduce several new members (even some non-members) to the thrill of handling birds. It is also a good example in demonstrating to people the value that can be obtained from banding even relatively low numbers of birds.

Another less sociable activity that Tony has been involved in recently with help from Gillian Vaughan was a night session of mist netting on the southern shores of the Manukau Harbour. This was an all-night activity but highly successful, capturing over 50 birds, mainly Red Knots but also singles of Turnstone, godwit, oystercatcher and a lonely Red-necked Stint. Gillian is still amazed at the minute size of the stint in the hand. Ask her about the experience some time.

Another one of David Melville's Yellow Sea-banded godwits has been seen in the Manukau Harbour. The Firth of Thames bird is still present although in recent times has been seen more often on the Thames side of the estuary. These birds are from a initial banding sample of only 73.

There have been some good wader sightings in the Manukau Harbour recently, including the regular Broad-billed Sandpiper, a Grey-tailed Tattler, a Little Curlew, a Large Sand Dotterel, a Mongolian Dotterel, 9 Little Terns, 48 Pacific Golden Plovers, 9 Curlew Sandpipers, 30 Red-necked Stints, 11 Whimbrels and a Black tailed Godwit.

There are also some good waders at Miranda including a Terek Sandpiper, 3 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a Red necked Stint, several golden plovers, while at Thames there have been up to 22 Whimbrels and a Little Tern.

At the Mangere Estuary Ray Clough has a couple of Marsh Sandpipers, breeding Black-fronted Dotterels and a range of other smaller waders on an infrequent basis.

In the Whangamarino wetland near Meremere there have been regular reports of Spotless Crakes and Fernbirds close to the Causeway Road. A sighting of a Marsh Crake has generated sudden ornithological interest in that area.

(DAVID LAWRIE)

Waikato

Waikato rounded out the year with a traditional shindig at the DoC conference rooms, with good food, humour and company. About 30 people attended – always a fun event.

The first 2003 field trip was up Kakepuku's razorback ridges, putting the hard yards in for the 6th year of these five-minute bird counts. It was agreed that the mountain has not got less steep since the last count. All common bush birds were present, including Tui fledglings. Laurie Hoverd, member on the spot at Kakepuku, has reported that there are around 19 robins still on the mountain – they were released there in 1999.

The first official meeting on 19 February was a talk by Michelle McKinzie on the bird populations of Katiki Point, Moeraki, Otago. Michelle is from Oregon, and was completing her BA through the School for International Training, based at the University of Waikato. It is pleasing to hear that White-faced Storm Petrels may be breeding on Katiki Point after all the years of being predated off the mainland.

The pending field trip to Pureora in the summer atlas period is well anticipated. Five Waikato members enjoyed a romp around East Cape over the summer, with two South Auckland and two Auckland members, madly filling in atlas sheets and creating general mayhem – particularly wherever I went. Keys lost to the tides, dog bites on the leg, toenails tortuously ripped, wasp stings and flat car batteries – the group fought valiantly against these elements and returned with over a hundred atlas sheets completed. The weather was hot and dry.

One interested non-member in Gisborne, Ivan Blair, had unique video footage of a nest in presumably a kingfisher's nesting hole in a bank. It was a sparrow nest with three chicks. The video shows a sparrow flying from the nest, and also shows the chicks. Tom & Hazel Harty are 'working' on his potential membership! Stella Rowe mentioned earlier that autumn is one season that needs attention for the atlas, so she recommends that people contact Paul for their 'square report'!

Malcolm Hutton reported from Ohiwa Harbour on the 19th January: 54 Banded Dotterels, 11 Pacific Golden Plovers, one Wrybill, 3800 Bar-tailed Godwits and 15 Red Knots, the most he's had there for years.

Also skulking around this particularly rich harbour were five Asiatic Whimbrels. Completing the line-up of interesting species were two Arctic Skuas (1 pale phase), one Little Shearwater, three White-faced Storm-petrels, and 20 New Zealand Dotterels. There were 6 dotterel chicks in November but none seem to have fledged. Oystercatchers abounded, with 240 Pied and 350 Variable (with four chicks).

The Waiotahi and Waiaua estuaries in the BOP area were checked in December. Both had New Zealand Dotterel chicks, yet their survival seems uncertain. Whirinaki River still has Blue Duck, as I found out in early February, with a lone bird spotted by the Canyon. I also saw good views of Yellow-crowned Parakeets.

Hugh Clifford spotted a Black Stilt, on 30 January, at a high tide roost in the Kinohaku arm of Kawhia harbour. It was seen in a flock of Pied Stilts, South Island Pied Oystercatchers and White-faced Herons. He noted that this area is not counted in the usual summer and winter censuses, and that it reveals the limitations we face when dealing with such a large harbour.

While on Christmas Eve, no less, Hugh Clifford was beach patrolling (a dedicated man, is he), and discovered the regularly-observed-at-this-time-of-year behaviour of pied oystercatchers flying north along the tide line in a small group of six. It was noted that they were unusually silent; Hugh normally notices them when they call. I suggest they were too shocked to find someone on the beach on Christmas Eve looking at them – and were highly suspicious! This is becoming a trend, as you may well remember Hugh finding a great stinking carcass of a turtle patrolling on St Valentine's Day. What will he find on Anzac Day, one wonders?

Patrick Buxton reports, from his property at 5-mile Bay in Taupo, the presence of wild Barbary Doves and Spotted Doves. These have been attracted, one may assume, by his captive-bred doves. Continuing the dove theme, Hugh had a call on 11 February concerning a new species in the wild. Someone in Newstead who knew of his interest in birds rang to ask about a strange bird that was feeding in their garden. He was able to identify it as a Diamond Dove, and saw it there again a couple of days later. No doubt it is an aviary escape from somewhere. He rang one of the bird fanciers' clubs and was told that they are a common aviary bird, and they are in the wild around Auckland. He'd not heard of this so will follow it up.

(PAUL CUMING)

Beach patrolling in the Waikato was alive and well in 2002. The number of kilometres patrolled was restored to the level of three years previously, due largely to the activity stimulated by the large wreck of prions in July. This wreck resulted in a large increase in the total number of birds found, and in the number found per kilometre. There were 32 species represented in the 2,527 seabirds found. As well, 19 non-seabirds were found, comprising 9 species.

Banded birds are always of special interest, and we found four of them in 2002. Three were gannets; an 11 year-old banded as a chick at White Island, and an 18 year-old and a 22 year-old banded as chicks at Muriwai. The other banded bird was a 2-year-old racing pigeon. An experienced racer, it failed to return home to Orewa when racing from Kaitia. Its remains were found three weeks later, on Waikorea Beach. This is nearly as far south as Raglan, so the bird, or at least its carcass, had overshot its destination considerably.

Banding of Grey-faced Petrel chicks at Mauao (Mount Maunganui) was carried out on 6 nights in December/January. The number of birds banded (23) was the lowest for 7 years.

(HUGH CLIFFORD)

Hawke's Bay

This has certainly been the summer for waders at Ahuriri Estuary, with most sightings conveniently at Westshore Lagoon close to the road. The water level in the lagoon has been very low, exposing large expanses of mud and small, shallow pools.

Our most exciting visitor was a Shore Plover, first seen on 27 December by John Cheyne, and seen by others in the following days before it disappeared. A good number of sandpipers have also been present at the lagoon: a Pectoral Sandpiper, at least 11 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and a Curlew Sandpiper, as well as a Wrybill, four Pacific Golden Plovers, a knot, six Red-necked Stints, a Turnstone and a tattler sp.

On occasions all of these have been seen together, with several Bar-tailed Godwits, Banded Dotterels and Black-fronted Dotterels. At least one pair of Black-fronted Dotterels had bred in the vicinity – two immatures with adults were present on more than one occasion. It was good to see the Curlew Sandpiper – it is many years since they regularly visited Ahuriri in small numbers.

In the neighbouring Northern Pond, three Royal Spoonbills have remained, one of which is colour-banded.

Those who knew Norman MacKenzie, the RR for Hawke's Bay prior to Kath Todd, will be saddened to hear of his recent death

(WAYNE TWYDLE)

Taranaki

The December meeting was well attended, perhaps in anticipation of the food and beverage provided by members for their annual after-meeting supper.

The monthly field trip, postponed twice due to inclement weather, finally took place at Ross and Karen Schumacher's property near Matau in inland Taranaki. Their 90 ha of regenerating bush has recently been covenanted and fencing is under way. One hawk-eyed member caught a brief glimpse of a NZ Falcon, possibly the one that was heard there a few weeks before.

Two visits to the North Waitaanga Conservation Area were undertaken in the hope of seeing and hearing the last-known Taranaki Kokako, which had only recently been "discovered" in the area. The bird was heard on both occasions.

Last year was again notable for a lack of Cattle Egrets in the province. Summer brought an influx of Pacific Golden Plovers, with up to 12 at the Waiongana rivermouth near New Plymouth, and a flock of 26 on a beach in the Okato district. A juvenile White-winged Black Tern at Waiongana and the disused Bell Block oxidation ponds was the first of that species seen in the area for four years.

Barry Hartley found a recently-dead Spine-tailed Swift on a beach near Rahotu near where he and David Medway saw one on the wing in 1998.

Shell Todd Oil Services has sponsored the erection of a vermin-proof fence around the Grey-faced Petrel nesting colony at Rapanui on the coast, some 60 km north of New Plymouth. This awaits our inspection. Atlasing is progressing well, with only one square unvisited, but a small number need to be revisited.

A few months ago, Dean Caskey of the Department of Conservation told us about the Blue Duck repopulation work being carried out in Egmont National Park. Dean continues to provide us with regular updates on this ambitious plan. Predator control now under way should be of considerable value.

(PETER FRYER)

Wanganui

There was lots of excitement here in Wanganui in late November and early December with the sighting of a possible nesting pair of Chestnut Teal. Colin Ogle was contacted by a local farmer and he, Ian Saville and Brent Stephenson went to investigate.

Several local OSNZ members went down to Foxton Beach for the open day on Saturday 23 November where they saw, amongst other birds, a Far-eastern Curlew, four Curlew Sandpipers and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

At a December meeting, Nic Peet of the DoC Recovery Group for conservation of Blue Ducks gave an interesting talk. The duck is a nationally endangered species with fewer than 2,400 individuals, half in the North Island. There are a great many more males than females as they are the more vulnerable to predators, such as possums, rats and stoats which eat eggs and kill nesting females. Nic said stoats were the greatest present threat. They can be controlled by trapping but this is very labour-intensive. Areas where stoats are trapped show a marked improvement in the survival rate of young birds.

Efforts to conserve North Island birds aim to secure present populations, re-establish populations, develop a captive breeding programme and support translocation to the Mount Taranaki region. Currently there are 16 private breeders with 13 breeding pairs already established. 18 young ducks have been released at Mount Taranaki in the past few years.

Colin reports a Long-tailed Cuckoo in the Tangahoe valley inland from Hawera on 25 January. On 11 January he and a whole bus-load, over 50 people, watched a New Zealand Falcon harassing a harrier in the Moawhango valley east of Waiouru - they were on one of the DoC's Summer Nature Programme trips.

A White Heron was seen in the city at Virginia Lake on 16 December by Nic Peet and Ian Sutherland. It was only a passing visitor and was gone the next day. The Little Shag colony there continues to flourish, with 15 nests this season, all with young. There have been 25 godwits on the Wanganui River estuary over the summer.

(BILL GREENWOOD)

Wellington

What would you say to an opportunity to be involved in a breeding study (in all aspects: nest checks, measuring, weighing, banding, recording data) of a species for which there is almost no record of research in Australia or New Zealand, and which is the rarest bird in the National Museum's collection?

And what if the work involved was so convenient it could be undertaken in your lunch-hour, and out of the weather? Well, the target species is the Rock Dove, and the nest-sites are all in the James Smith's parking building, where several members have since November been engaged in "hands on" study, under the guidance of Ralph Powlesland.

Ralph reports that of the 24 nests where eggs have been seen, most have contained "a pigeon pair", from which on average one chick has fledged. Some eggs have been found to be cracked, apparently from being laid upon unlined concrete ledges. Two adults and 25 chicks have been individually colour-banded, so we hope to see many of these flashing their adornments about the city before long.

If, however, such activity is not quite "your pigeon", some of our members have been engaged, not too far from the CBD, at Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, monitoring the calls of the Little Spotted Kiwi or the nests of Saddleback. Biggest news at KWS has been the hatching of five Kaka eggs, and the arrival of a wild male to join the 5 captive-bred adults.

The November count of the Kapiti Island shore included 764 nests of Black-backed Gull, 270 of Red-billed Gull, 9 nests among 27 Royal Spoonbills, 12 of White-fronted Tern, 12 of Black Shag, and a sighting of a Fiordland Crested Penguin.

In November also, on Mana Island, 14 Common Diving Petrel chicks were processed. One of the parent birds was identified as having been brought to Mana as a chick in 1997. This is an encouraging sign of the success of this translocation project.

About 150 Black-backed Gull chicks were banded during the annual visit to Onoke Spit in December. The associated banding of Caspian Terns by members of the Wairarapa Branch had to be deferred, as the chicks were too young.

Opportunities to visit more exotic places (at least vicariously) have recently been provided to members by our own Ralph Powlesland and Ian Armitage. In December Ralph reported on Birding in Chile, which he and Mary had organised with local guides. Extending through so many degrees of latitude Chile offered a great variety of habitats and birds, some familiar (e.g. torrent ducks, braided rivers, southern oceans, the Southern Giant Petrel), some less so: burrowing owl, Giant Hummingbird, a pair of Andean Condors and dozens of other species.

From Chile to China. In February Ian Armitage, from the wealth of his experience of the People's Republic gained through his visits as a forestry consultant over twenty years, shared some observations of birds and their environment there. There had been severe destruction of the natural habitat during the Great Leap Forward, said Ian. Land clearance and deforestation had contributed to erosion, particularly of the loess soils, and, together with industrial development, had led to serious pollution of water and air.

In describing China, diversity is the key word, Ian continued: in climate, geography, habitat, and species. Bird species total 1,186, of which 99 are endemic. 183 species (15%) are endangered. There is now a strong focus on management of national parks and nature reserves, including forests and wetlands, but the work is hampered by lack of resources.

Ian focused on several sites in detail in order to show the impact of habitat changes on birds. For instance the increasing salinity of a lake due to pumping of water for agricultural irrigation. Still, the conservation ethic is the strongest it has ever been, and there has been material conservation progress in the last 5-10 years. The outlook for the conservation of birds appears to be good, Ian concluded.

(ROD ORANGE)

Nelson

The most recent event was a training weekend taken by David Melville at Rob and Anneke Schuckard's coastal property on mist netting, handling and processing small birds. We handled over 100 birds of 12 species, the largest being two kingfishers and the smallest two Grey Warblers. Interpreting the stage of each moult became a fascinating challenge.

The summer wader census was held in good weather with some interesting sightings. Peter Reid identified two Siberian Tattlers on Motueka Spit after hearing their call. This was the first record of the species on the spit.

Gannet numbers at Farewell Spit appear to have plateaued, with the smallest nesting site being washed out and the others slightly enlarged. About 30 chicks were banded and several adults, previously banded with colour bands which had since disappeared, were rebanded with readable metal bands. One adult caught had been banded as a chick at White Island. We are pleased that new DoC personnel at the Golden Bay Area Office are interested in our activities at Farewell Spit and have assisted at the recent census weekends there. We are indebted to them for providing transport and a house to stay in.

During the second half of March, local OSNZers, with the help of Polytech students, are undertaking a benthic survey in the Farewell Spit tidal flats. Thanks to David Melville for organising this. It is hoped that the survey will provide insights into wader feeding habits.

Pauline Samways is using a year's paid leave from teaching to do an in-depth survey of Motueka Sandspit, looking particularly at the nesting success of Variable Oystercatchers and Banded Dotterels. This dynamic area, a feeding site for thousands of migrants and nesting area for several local wader species, has never been given protection from dogs, horses, motor bikes or 4-wheel drive vehicles, in spite of submissions from environmental groups to the local council going back over many years. We hope Pauline's work and findings will result in a more understanding attitude.

Sam Leary will be working on D'Urville Island for three months and is hoping to fill in the atlas squares there. We are planning to visit other more remote squares during the year.

In Golden Bay Richard Stocker continues Rock Wren observations above the Cobb Valley.

A Bar-tailed Godwit, banded by David Melville in the Yellow Sea feeding grounds, has been seen in the Manawatu, and SIPOs banded in Christchurch have been seen in Motueka. SIPOs banded on Bell's Island are still being seen locally.



Other less common birds seen locally include a White-necked Heron at Maungarakau wetland, a Chestnut Teal at Nelson's Natureland, an immature White-winged Black Tern and a Little Egret in the Waimea Estuary.

While walking the Milford track in February several people saw a pair of Reef Herons above a waterfall in a tributary of the Arthur River several kilometres from Milford Sound.

GILLIAN POLLOCK

Marlborough

The region is in a revival mode and we thank David Melville for taking us under his wing for the past year or so. The year began with a get-together of local members at a barbecue held at Brian and Sue Bell's home. Here we discussed what might be done over the year.

We began with a pigeon and other species count on Maud Island for DoC, which might become a quarterly event. This coincided with the banding of Fluttering Shearwater chicks. We had 15 eggs this season. Although 14 hatched, only 10 young fledged, but still it was our best year yet.

Regular monthly counts have begun at Lake Grassmere. These will be held on the third Saturday of each month (except April when it will be moved to the second Saturday to avoid Easter). The first count in January gave an impressive number of Australasian Shovelers (510), Grey Teal (206 plus, and there were also an estimated 1000-1500 on Lake Elterwater) and Pied Stilts (136). We were delighted by the presence of some less common waders - Red-necked Phalarope (1), Red-necked Stint (2), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (3), Pacific Golden Plover (3), and a Wrybill (perhaps the start of the migration north).

Bill Cash is co-ordinating the bird mapping scheme, and we are already working out ways to cover some of the more difficult squares. He has enlisted the help of a number on non-members to provide extra data.

(BRIAN BELL)

Canterbury

Summer has seen most of Canterbury's wetlands drier than usual, probably due to the El Nino weather pattern, with its greater incidence of dry nor'west winds. The dry may have induced larger numbers of Pacific Golden Plovers to inhabit Greenpark Sands at Lake Ellesmere, however, with well over 100 birds present.

Colin Hill is always at an advantage for finding unusual birds at Lake Ellesmere, both living and farming on the margin of Greenpark Sands. Thus whilst at work, he found a pratincole (presumably Oriental) and a Japanese Snipe within a few metres of each other - that's what I call a great job!

The two Sanderlings found in spring have also been present on and off, possibly with the odd trip to Ki-Wainono. The latter birds had gone missing for the Ellesmere summer wader count, which found generally normal numbers of the normal species, with the only rarity being a Black-tailed Godwit. This godwit may be the same individual as last year, unless a gammy leg is a normal feature of the species. The wader count was rounded off with the now almost traditional barbie and al fresco dining courtesy of Colin Hill. The home-produced venison was especially delicious.

Kaikoura has turned up a few interesting birds, with Sav Saville having the good fortune of seeing a Chinstrap Penguin on the South Bay breakwater in late November. A Siberian Tattler has been seen on and off amongst the Turnstones that inhabit Kaikoura Peninsula. One of the latter species sported an orange leg-flag and therefore became the southernmost record of an individual flagged in Victoria.

Alan Collins has been turning up a few interesting species in South Canterbury, with some good seabirds off Ki-Wainono, the mole at Timaru, and from the dolphin-watching boat that operates out of the latter port. With a couple of Cook's Petrels, good numbers of Cape Petrels, and smatterings of mollymawks and shearwaters, who knows what the Canterbury Bight might produce. On one occasion rafts totalling about 40 Arctic Skuas were seen from Ki-Wainono, and amongst them were at least one Pomarine Skua. A Mongolian Dotterel was at Ki-Wainono in late February.

A field meeting in South Canterbury visiting Ki-Wainono and Washdyke Lagoons found evidence of strangely behaving Royal Spoonbills on the maimais at Ki-Wainono. When followed up in the next couple of days, evidence was discovered of the first breeding of the species in Canterbury, with up to six nests and one well-grown chick exercising its wings. A Glossy Ibis was also roosting on one of the maimais on the field meeting. No migratory waders were seen. Washdyke Lagoon was its usual hazy self, the only birds of any note being the pair of Black-fronted Dotterels with a small chick.

The February indoor meeting was the members' night. Colin Hill showed slides of waders, especially the rarer ones present at Lake Ellesmere in the preceding few months. Paul Scofield outlined the work he has been doing with Chatham Island Mollymawks in the difficult environs of The Pyramid in the Chathams. Richard Holdaway then entertained us with a tour he undertook of Norfolk Island and Australia.

(NICK ALLEN)

What's on



Northland

Evening meetings, 2nd Thursday of the month, ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.
West coast beach patrols ph. Prue Cozens (09) 437 7760.
East coast beach patrols ph. Pauline Smith (09) 435 3060.
Whangarei Harbour wader count ph. Tony Beauchamp (09) 436 2661.
North Kaipara wader count ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

Auckland

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45 pm in the Kohia Teachers' Centre in the grounds of Auckland College of Education, 74 Epsom Ave, Mt Eden.

South Auckland

Evening meetings are held at the Papakura Croquet Clubrooms, 5 Chapel Street, Papakura, on the second Tuesday of each month (February - November) at 7.45 pm
Beach patrols ph. Rob Wheeler (09) 299 7069
Manukau and Firth of Thames censuses ph Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284

Waikato

Beach patrols ph Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751
Hamilton Lake Census ph Barry Friend (07) 843 6729
Forest Lake Census ph Brian Challinor (07) 855 2561
Cambridge Lake Census ph Hugh or Paul
Bird sightings ph Paul Cuming (07) 829 8215
Field trips (monthly) ph Paul Cuming
Evening meetings, every third Wednesday, 7.30 pm DoC London Street, Hamilton City, ph Paul Cuming
Atlas Sheets, Stella Rowe ph (07) 843 5199

Taranaki

Evening meetings - held at 7.30 pm 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).

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

Evening meetings - first Monday of the month, DoC offices, Wellington City Library, ph Stuart Nicholson (04) 934 5940.
Matiu / Somes Island surveys ph. Rod Orange (04) 473 1912.
Pauatahanui Inlet surveys ph. Allan Munro (04) 566 4834.
Beach patrols ph. Jean Luke (04) 904 1704.

Nelson

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

Canterbury

Evening meetings last Monday of the month, Spreydon Bowling Club, Domain Terrace, Christchurch. Monthly field trips - dates vary.
Contact Nick Allen (03) 312 7183, nick_allen@xtra.co.nz.

Otago

Evening meetings Otago Art Society building, cnr Albany & Great King Streets. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041.

Southland

Evening meetings (in conjunction with the Field Club) held every second Thursday at 7.30 pm, Otatara Community Centre, Dunns Rd, Otatara. Field trips usually following Saturday, and beach patrols most weekends. Ph. Phil Rhodes (03) 217 2757 or Lloyd Esler (03) 213 0404.

