

- REID, B.; WILLIAMS, G. R. 1975. The Kiwi. In *Biogeography and Ecology in New Zealand*. G. Kushel (ed.). The Hague: D. W. Junk.
- ROBSON, F. D. 1947. *Kiwis in Captivity* (4th ed. with additional material 1958). Napier: Hawkes Bay Art Gallery & Museum.
- SOPER, M. F. 1976. *New Zealand Birds*. 2nd ed. Christchurch: Whitcoulls.

A. T. STURMER, *Botany and Zoology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North*

A. D. GRANT, *Department of Conservation, Private Bag, Christchurch*



Spur-winged Plover longevity record

On 2.3.87 I last saw a Spur-winged Plover (*Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*) which I had banded BR/YA at Akers Road, Otatara, near Invercargill, on 8.9.71. I believe that this bird, a male, was at least 20 months old when banded. Its mate in 1971 was a banded female OY/AG. OY/AG's previous mate, also a banded bird, had been killed on the road by a vehicle on 1.11.70. On 15.11.70 I saw OY/AG in coition with a "new" male which had noticeably stiff legs and knobby knees. I saw her again with this bird on 18.5.71, 18.6.71, 16.7.71 and 8.9.71, when the nest was found and the male trapped and banded. A male Spur-winged Plover is known to have attempted coition at 10 months of age (Barlow *et al.* 1972), and so BR/YA was probably at least that age on 15.11.70.

In early July 1985, Southland Acclimatisation Society field officer Mark Sutton reported seeing a banded Spur-winged Plover at Akers Road, and on 13.7.85 I found the bird and had good views of the leg-bands through a 20x telescope. The red and yellow bands were easily picked up, but the blue band had only a small fleck of paint left in one place. These were aluminium bands which had been anodised, enamelled and baked. The monel (M) band was bright and shiny. It had been electroplated as an aid to visibility. On 13.7.85 I saw BR/YA copulating with an unbanded female and later found their nest about 300 m from BR/YA's 1971 nest and banding site.

I next saw BR/YA on 18.6.86, when he had moved 2 km to soccer grounds at Sandy Point, on a strip of land between the road and the Oreti River. Only the yellow band was easily identified. The "blue" band was pale dull metal with no visible paint left, and the red band was mostly pale and dull with small flecks of red paint in places in the engraved numbers on the band. The electroplated monel band was still bright, and could sometimes be seen without telescope or binoculars when caught by the sun.

Between June 1986 and February 1987, I saw the bird on almost every one of my fortnightly visits to the area. He was one of a flock of 9-17 Spur-winged Plovers which regularly fed, loafed and preened on the soccer grounds and a tidal spit across the river. At least five of the birds had deformed feet or legs, a known effect of living in an area with a high sheep population (Barlow 1978a). Throughout the 1986/87 breeding season I saw no territorial behaviour or signs of breeding in this area. Harriers (*Circus approximans*)

were frequently present and allowed to pass by without the aggressive attacks usually made by breeding Spur-winged Plovers. It would be easy to assume that these Spur-winged Plovers were non-breeding geriatrics. However, in the 1965/69 study, it was found that breeding Spur-winged Plovers sometimes join loose flocks when off-duty from a nest or brood, and at least one Spur-winged Plover bred right to the time of its (apparently natural) death (Barlow *et al.* 1972).

On 18.6.86, BR/YA was still knobby-kneed and stiff-legged, but there was little apparent change until 14.2.87 when the field note reads: "Very stiff, walking jerkily, normal flight, untidy landing." On 2.3.87 he was on the soccer ground among a flock of 17. "Shuffled reluctantly away from circling motor mower. All other birds flew. One stiff leg stretched out straight to the side, like peg-leg. Joint seems quite fixed." I returned on 4.3.87. No Spur-winged Plovers were on the soccer ground but 12 were loafing on the tidal flats across the river, too far away for bands to be visible. I searched the rough grass on the perimeters of the soccer ground to no avail.

On 17.3.87, 12 were on the soccer field, including 4 with deformed feet, but BR/YA was not among them, and a further search of the perimeters and down to the river did not reward me. The bird was not seen on further fortnightly visits from April to July. It is assumed dead on or about 2.3.87, at a certain age of at least 16 years 4 months (Sep 1971 minus 10 months = Nov 1970 hatch date), but a probable age of at least 17 years 2 months (Nov 1970 minus 10 months = Jan 1970 hatch date).

BR/YA was the last known survivor of the 400+ Spur-winged Plovers that were individually colour-banded in the 1965/71 study of the species in Southland.

The previous longevity record for a Spur-winged Plover was 12 years 1 month (Barlow 1978b).

LITERATURE CITED

- BARLOW, M. L.; MULLER, P. M.; SUTTON, R. R. 1972. Breeding data on the Spur-winged Plover in Southland, New Zealand. *Notornis* 19: 212-249.
BARLOW, M. 1978a. Deformed feet of Spur-winged Plovers and Pied Stilt in Southland sheep country. *Notornis* 25: 150.
BARLOW, M. 1978b. Spur-winged Plover longevity record. *Notornis* 25: 160.

MAIDA BARLOW, 38 Filleul Street, Invercargill