

# NORFOLK ISLAND NOTES 1968 TO 1984

By J. L. MOORE

This is the first report to be issued based on information submitted under the OSNZ South-west Pacific Islands Records Scheme, which was instituted in 1981.

The format of the report follows closely that of *Norfolk Island Notes 1971 to 1980* (Moore 1981), which was based on data supplied by OSNZ members and provided the stimulus for OSNZ to introduce a records scheme for the islands of the SW Pacific.

Much of the data presented here predates the formal introduction of the records scheme and clearly demonstrates that the value of such observations does not diminish with age. Anyone having observations made during a visit to any SW Pacific island in earlier years should therefore submit their notes to the records scheme.

Norfolk Island notes have been received for 10 visits to the island plus notes from the seabird log of the yacht *Derwent* as it passed close by the eastern side of Norfolk Island. Observations relate to periods varying from a few hours to over three weeks, and the month, year and period, together with the names of the ten observers are given below in chronological sequence.

|                        |         |                        |
|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 1968 January           | 16 days | R. B. Sibson           |
| 1971 November          | 14 days | H. L. Wakelin          |
| 1971 November/December | 7 days  | C. A. Fleming          |
| 1974 March             | 14 days | H. L. Wakelin          |
| 1976 March             | 15 days | H. L. Wakelin          |
| 1979 November          | 9 days  | A. Habraken & D. White |
| 1981 November          | 17 days | J. L. & M. Moore       |
| 1982 September         | 6 days  | B. D. Heather          |
| 1982 September         | 5 hours | T. Lovegrove           |
| 1982 September         | 10 days | J. C. Henley           |
| 1984 December          | 23 days | J. L. & M. Moore       |

Records have been received on 69 species, of which seven have not previously been recorded for the island. These seven species are marked with an asterisk in the species notes which follow.

The 53 species in the notes are those for which the data submitted appear to be of significance in the light of published information, unnecessary duplication being avoided.

The passage close to Norfolk Island of the ornithological expedition aboard the yacht *Derwent*, on its homeward leg from Ile des Pins to New Zealand, has provided a brief insight into the seabird fauna around the island not previously available from land-based observations. As the results of the expedition are to be reported elsewhere, the data included here are limited to observations made during the period 5.30 to 10.10 a.m. on 19 March 1982 while the yacht was within the latitudes 28°54' S and 29°12' S. Data from the log of the *Derwent* have been used in the preparation of Figure 1 to show

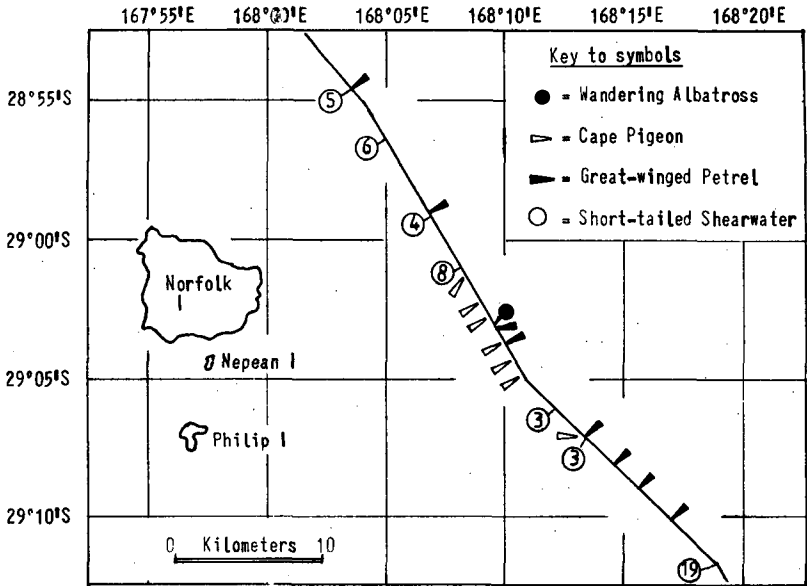


FIGURE 1 — The course of the yacht *Derwent* on 19 September 1982, showing the positions where seabirds not normally recorded from Norfolk Island were logged. The figures in the open circles are the number of Short-tailed Shearwaters in each party

the yacht's approximate positions when seabirds not normally recorded from Norfolk Island were logged.

As with the 1981 report, many of the records relate to migrant waders and a clearer picture is now emerging of the value of the island, both as a stopping-off place for small numbers of a wide variety of species, and also as an area for such species as Least Golden Plover, Whimbrel, Turnstone and the tattlers, which are able to exploit the open grassland and coral reef habitats, to spend the Northern Hemisphere winter.

In keeping with other recent publications on Norfolk Island ornithology, Australian vernacular names have (with minor exceptions) been used in the species notes.

I thank all those who submitted their records to the SW Pacific Islands Records Scheme, particularly those whose notes are in this report. I hope that they will feel the same sense of achievement at seeing their records in print as I do.

## SPECIES NOTES

WANDERING ALBATROSS *Diomedea exulans*

One seen from the *Derwent* on 19 September 1982 about 16 km (10 miles) east of Norfolk Island (TL). See Figure 1.

\*CAPE PIGEON *Daption capense*

One or two birds accompanied the *Derwent* intermittently from 7.20 a.m. onward on 19 September 1982 as it passed to the east of Norfolk and Philip Islands (TL). See Figure 1.

\*GREAT-WINGED (GREY-FACED) PETREL *Pterodroma macroptera*

One or two seen from the *Derwent* on several occasions on 19 September 1982 as it passed to the east of Norfolk and Philip Islands (TL). See Figure 1.

BLACK-WINGED PETREL *P. nigripennis*

Many over Headstone at dusk in January 1968 with smaller numbers elsewhere by day and c.40 dead at Cook Memorial (RBS). Aerial display observed November-December 1971 (CAF). Only two seen 10-23 March 1974 but recorded in some numbers at Black Bank and Rocky Point from 1 to 14 March 1976 (HW). Birds inspecting nest burrows on Philip Island on 15 November 1979 (AH, DW). Two off Kingston on 11 December 1984 and two at Anson Bay on 20 and 21 December (JL&MM).

FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER *Puffinus carneipes*

One found ashore among Wedge-tailed Shearwaters near the golf course on the evening of 16 November 1979. It was measured to confirm the identity and released (AH, DW).

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER *P. pacificus*

Rafts of birds still present at dusk between 10 and 23 March 1974 (HW). An estimated 10 000 rafting off Anson Bay on 18 November 1979 (AH, DW). Large numbers calling at night over Burnt Pine during mist and rain in mid-December 1984 (JL&MM).

\*SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER *P. tenuirostris*

Several parties of 3-19 birds logged by the *Derwent* on 19 September 1982. All moving SW on return migration to the Bass Strait breeding grounds after wintering in the N. Pacific (TL). See Figure 1.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *P. assimilis*

A dead bird at Rocky Point in November 1971 (CAF) and several dead on Philip Island on 15 November 1979 (AH, DW). An injured bird at Slaughter Bay on 10 November 1981, found dead next day (JL&MM). Parties of 1-14, totalling 48 birds, logged by the *Derwent* between 5.28 and 10.10 a.m. on 19 September 1982 (TL). One brought from Cascade to New Zealand trapped in the hold of the *Isle de Lumiere* was released in Auckland on 11 November 1982 (DW).

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD *Phaethon rubricauda*

Birds disputing over nest sites between 1 and 13 November 1971 (HW). Some fledglings still at nests from 10 to 23 March 1974, and nests at all stages from eggs to fully fledged young from 1 to 14 March 1976 (HW). At Cascade c.150 displaying on 17 November 1979 (AH, DW). First eggs laid at Cascade on 11 November 1981 (JL&MM).

AUSTRALASIAN GANNET *Sula bassana serrator*

Three birds sitting on nests on Philip Island on 15 November 1979 (AH).

BROWN BOOBY *S. leucogaster*

One on Nepean Island and one flying past Cook Memorial between 4 and 9 September 1982 (BDH).

MASKED BOOBY *S. dactylatra*

At Rocky Point a few pairs with one egg and four chicks in January 1968 (RBS), three chicks there in November/December 1971 (CAF), and young there in March 1974 (HW). On 15 November 1979 nests on Philip Island contained eggs or downy young, whereas on Nepean Island young were already fully fledged (AH, DW). On islands near Cook Memorial, several nests incubating and one chick in down by 9 September 1982 (BDH). A bird found near Hamilton, New Zealand, in July 1983 (which subsequently died) had been banded six months previously on Philip Island (confirmed by O. Evans, pers. comm.).

WHITE-FACED HERON *Ardea novaehollandiae*

Singles at Kingston and near Anson Point in January 1968 (RBS). Two in November/December 1971 (CAF). Present Kingston and two at Mission Pond in March 1974 and very common in March 1976 (HW). Four at Kingston and one at Cascade in November 1981 (JL&MM). Up to nine at Kingston in September 1982 (BDH), and up to 16 there in December 1984 (JL&MM).

WHITE HERON *Egretta alba*

One at Kingston between 1 and 14 March 1976 (HW). Probably the same bird previously reported there in July 1976 (Moore 1981).

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis molucca*

One at Kingston between 1 and 14 March 1976 (HW). Probably the same bird as reported there in November 1975 (McKean *et al.* 1976) and in July 1976 (Moore 1981).

ROYAL SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Singles at Kingston from 1 to 13 November and 28 November to 4 December 1971 (HW, CAF) and also between 1 and 14 March 1976 (HW). Probably the same birds previously reported for September 1971 and July 1976 (Moore 1981).

There is also a need to set the record straight regarding the Spoonbill reported on Norfolk Island in 1892 by Basset Hull (1909). Although often quoted and widely accepted, the record is incorrect. Reference to North (1892) and to Hindwood (1940) shows that the bird was in fact taken on Lord Howe Island.

\*MOUNTAIN DUCK *Tadorna tadornoides*

A female at Kingston from 2 to 24 December 1984 (JL&MM).

MALLARD *A. platyrhynchos*

Three Mallard/Black Duck hybrids at Kingston in November 1981 (JL&MM). More than 50 Mallard present in September 1982 (BDH). One banded on Norfolk Island in August 1982 was shot near Waipu, New Zealand, on 30 April 1983 (confirmed by O. Evans, pers. comm.). A male at Watermill

Pond in December 1984 and up to 20 females and immatures there, including several hybrids (JL&MM).

**BLACK (GREY) DUCK** *Anas superciliosa*

Three at Kingston and four near South Pacific Hotel in January 1968 (RBS). A few in November/December 1971 (CAF). Two at Mission Pond and 22 near Headstone in March 1974 (HW). Two at Mission Pond and 15 at Kingston in November 1981 and up to 15 there in December 1984, including three females with broods (JL&MM).

**AUSTRALIAN KESTREL** *Falco cenchroides*

A pair at Headstone between 28 November and 4 December 1971 (CAF). One at Rocky Point in March 1974 and birds at several localities in March 1976 (HW). A pair with two fledged young in November 1979 (AH, DW). Single birds at four widespread localities in November 1981 (JL&MM) and still widespread in September 1982 (BDH), but seen only in the Kingston/Middlegate area in December 1984, reports indicating that some had been culled to protect endemic species (JL&MM).

The 1971 record is the first occasion that more than one bird was reported and probably indicates the start of colonisation of the island by this species.

**SPOTLESS CRAKE** *Porzana tabuensis*

Between 4 and 9 September 1982 several heard at Mission Pond and one seen and another heard at New Cascade Road in response to taped calls (BDH).

**PURPLE SWAMPHEN** *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Two at Mission Pond and one near South Pacific Hotel in January 1968 (RBS). One at New Cascade Road in November 1981 (JL&MM). Several at Mission Pond in September 1982 (BDH), and two there and one at New Cascade Road in December 1984 (JL&MM).

**PIED OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

One at Kingston on 22 September 1982 (JCH).

**LEAST GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis fulva*

At Kingston, 43 max. in January 1968 (RBS). Widespread on grasslands in November and December 1971 (HW, CAF). Up to 30 in March 1974 (HW). An island census of 140 in November 1979 (AH, DW). Up to 70 at Kingston and 20 at Airport in November 1981 and c. 70 at Kingston in December 1984 (JL&MM).

**DOUBLE-BANDED PLOVER** *Charadrius bicinctus*

Eight at Slaughter Bay between 10 and 23 March 1974 (HW).

**EASTERN CURLEW** *Numenius madagascariensis*

One found dead on the golf course on 17 November 1979 was presumably the bird seen a few days previously at Kingston (AH, DW). One at Kingston from 14 to 17 December 1984 and two there from 18 to 24 December (JL&MM).

**WHIMBREL** *N. phaeopus*

Asiatic race (*N. p. variegatus*): Up to 11 in January 1968 (RBS). Up to eight in November and December 1971 (HW, CAF). One in March 1974 and three in March 1976 (HW). Up to nine in November 1981 and up to 12 in December 1984 (JL&MM). The above maxima all relate to the Kingston area but birds also recorded at other localities both coastal and inland.

American race (*N.p.hudsonicus*): One at Kingston and Watermill Valley from 7 to 16 November 1981 did not associate with the Asiatic birds present (JL&MM).

\*BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW *N. tahitiensis*

One at Kingston on 20 January 1968 after high winds on the previous day; not present on 21 January (RBS).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

One on 13 January 1968 (RBS). Up to 12 between 1 November and 4 December 1971 (HW, CAF). One in March 1974 and one in March 1976 (HW). Up to 12 from 1 to 16 November 1981 and one on 2 and 3 December 1984 (JL&MM). All in the Kingston-Watermill Valley area.

\*MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*

One at Kingston from 31 October to 13 November 1981; three on 14 November and five on 15 and 16 November. One at Kingston from 4 to 11 December 1984 (JL&MM).

WANDERING TATTLER *T. incana*

At Kingston/Point Hunter, three from 20 to 23 January 1968 (RBS), one on 10 March 1974 (HW), and one identified by its call on 15 December 1984 (JL&MM).

GREY-TAILED TATTLER *T. brevipes*

Two at Kingston/Slaughter Bay between 1 and 13 November 1971; singles there on 10 March 1974, in March 1976 (HW), and between 1 and 15 November 1981 (JL&MM). One at Kingston Common pond daily from 2 to 24 December 1984, identified by call (JL&MM).

TATTLER sp.

As both tattler species have now been recorded on several occasions, and as identification as to species is possible only under unusually favourable conditions, the total number of tattlers present is often the only complete data available. For consistency the following records cover all birds seen, and where individual birds have been identified as to species, they are listed both here and under the separate species heading. All records are for the Kingston area except for occasional birds at Cascade.

Up to 6 in January 1968 (RBS). Two during November and December 1971 (HW, CAF). Two in March 1974 and two in March 1976 (HW). Up to three in November 1981 (JL&MM). One in September 1982 (BDH). Up to 5 in December 1984 (JL&MM).

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*

One at Kingston on 9 and 10 December 1984, two between 11 and 17 December, and one remaining to 18 December (JL&MM).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

At Kingston up to 50 in January 1968 (RBS). Up to 20 in November and December 1971 (HW, CAF). Up to 100 in March 1974 (HW). Four on Philip Island on 15 November 1979, and a Norfolk Island census of 110 on 16 November (AH, DW). Up to 60 at Kingston and 12 at Airport in November 1981 and up to 128 at Kingston and three at Crystal Pool in December 1984 (JL&MM).

**LATHAM'S SNIPE** *Gallinago hardwickii*

One at Kingston on 15 November 1981 (JL&MM).

**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

At Kingston, one from 31 October to 6 November 1981 with up to five from 7 to 16 November. One from 9 to 24 December 1984 (JL&MM).

**SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** *C. acuminata*

Up to 12 at Kingston and Watermill Valley between 1 and 13 November 1971 (HW). One at Kingston from 31 October to 8 November 1981, increasing to a maximum of 13 on 15 November (JL&MM).

**\*PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *C. melanotos*

One to three at Kingston from 31 October to 16 November 1981 (JL&MM).

**RED-NECKED STINT** *C. ruficollis*

At Kingston, one or two from 1 to 13 November 1971 (HW) and up to six from 28 November to 4 December (CAF). Nine there on 15 November 1981 and six on 16 November, with up to four there between 2 and 24 December 1984 (JL&MM).

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** *Himantopus himantopus*

One at Kingston on 16 November 1981 after severe storms between Norfolk Island and New Zealand the previous day (JL&MM).

**SILVER GULL** *Larus novaehollandiae*

An adult and four immatures at Emily Bay on 9 September 1982 (BDH).

**WHITE-WINGED TERN** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

At Kingston, single birds between 1 and 13 November 1971 (HW), from 31 October to 4 November 1981, and from 18 to 24 December 1984 (JL&MM).

**BLACK NODDY** *Anous minutus*

Thousands of birds at breeding colonies in gullies to north-east of Prince Phillip Drive in early December 1971 (CAF). Of several dozen nests inspected between 10 and 23 March 1974 only two were still occupied, each with a single well-developed chick (HW). On Philip Island on 15 November 1979, most birds sitting on eggs, whereas breeding had not started on Norfolk Island (AH,DW).

**WHITE TERN** *Gygis alba*

On 17/18 March 1974, many almost fledged young blown from their nest trees by very strong westerly winds were resting on the ground, tree stumps and fence posts (HW).

**GREY TERNLET** *Procelsterna cerulea*

Birds still present at nest sites at Duncombe Bay on 10 to 23 March 1974 (HW). At Philip Island, birds sitting on eggs and some nests with newly hatched chicks on 15 November 1979; with c.400 feeding offshore (AH, DW). Up to eight at Cook Memorial by 9 September 1982 (BDH).

**CRIMSON ROSELLA** *Platycercus elegans*

Very few present in March 1976 due to a disease causing extensive feather loss but which did not affect other species (HW).

**NORFOLK ISLAND PARAKEET** *Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae cookii*

Single birds at Mt Pitt, King Fern Gully and Selwyn Pine Road in January 1968 (RBS). Two at Mt Pitt and two at Red Road in November 1971 (HW). One seen in March 1974 and several groups heard between Mt Bates and N Coast in March 1976 (HW). Three at Mt Bates, three at Red Road and one at McLauchlan's Lane in November 1981 (JL&MM). One or two in September 1982 (BDH, JCH). Heard but not seen at Mt Bates in December 1984 (JL&MM). A captive breeding programme was initiated in 1984 by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in an attempt to stem the decline in the parakeet population, and some birds were captured for this purpose.

**SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO** *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

Calling birds heard near the Settlement in January 1968 (RBS), Cook Memorial and Burnt Pine in November 1981, and at Crystal Pool and Douglas Drive in December 1984 (JL&MM).

**NORFOLK ISLAND BOOBOOK OWL** *Ninox undulata*

One heard screeching at Rocky Point at night on 12 November 1979 (AH, DW).

**WELCOME SWALLOW** *Hirundo tahitica neoxena*

Up to seven at Kingston and Mt Pitt between 1 and 14 March 1976 (HW). One at Kingston between 7 and 16 November 1981 and two there between 3 and 22 December 1984 (JL&MM).

**SCARLET ROBIN** *Petroica multicolor*

Small numbers recorded by most observers, from fairly widespread localities, the largest count being 12 pairs and two singing males from Mt Pitt via the Bridle Path to Duncombe Bay Road in March 1976 (HW).

**LONG-BILLED WHITE-EYE** *Zosterops tenuirostris*

Small parties reported from several localities in November/December 1971 (HW, CAF), November 1981 (JL&MM), September 1982 (BDH) and December 1984 (JL&MM).

**WHITE-BREASTED WHITE-EYE** *Z. albogularis*

Birds thought to be of this species heard near Mt Bates in November 1981 but too high in the canopy for confirmation by sight ((JL&MM).

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