

NORFOLK ISLAND NOTES 1971 to 1980

By JAMES L. MOORE

These notes have been compiled from observations made by New Zealand ornithologists during occasional visits to Norfolk Island between September 1971 and November 1980.

The records were submitted mainly in response to a request for information published in the March 1980 issue of *OSNZ News*.

Data have been received from eight observers relating to ten visits to the island varying in duration from 3 to 15 days. The dates of these visits are given below in chronological sequence together with the names of the observers.

1971	September	F. J. Taylor
1976	July	M. F. Soper
1977	October	M. F. Soper
1978	March/April	P. Dormon
1978	July	E. G. Turbott
1978	September	M. F. Soper
1979	October/November	R. & N. Peachman
1979	November	J. L. & M. Moore
1980	November	J. L. & M. Moore
1980	November	R. & N. Peachman

The species list which follows contains those records which appear to be of significance in the light of existing published data. In addition, a further 22 species which are resident, or are regular breeding species, were recorded during all, or a majority of visits. A number of *unconfirmed second-hand records have been omitted.*

To assess the significance of the data received, a comparison has been made with other published information regarding Norfolk Island, particularly that relating to the past 20 years. The published record for the island is, however, limited and contains gaps of several years. The statements included with some species regarding the extent of previous occurrence should therefore be regarded as tentative and subject to revision should a more complete knowledge of the island's bird life become available.

Of the 68 species for which records have been received 12 are not listed in previous publications as occurring on Norfolk Island. These 12 species are identified with an asterisk in the species list. For a further 11 species the published data show only three or fewer occurrences.

Although a number of these little-recorded species are clearly vagrants, it is evident that migrant waders (Charadrii) have been

under-recorded in the past, and of the 16 wader species listed here, only five have been recorded on more than three previous occasions.

The value of this information considerably exceeds original expectations, amply justifying its retrieval and publication, and confirming that valuable data can be obtained during casual visits to small Pacific islands.

It has become evident during the preparation of this summary that valuable information obtained from such visits is likely to be irretrievably lost where, as in the case of Norfolk Island, no recognised ornithological or scientific body provides permanent facilities for its collection and eventual publication.

New Zealand appears to be well situated to provide such a facility for the islands of the SW Pacific, and the setting up of a depository for such records, with the object of publishing summaries whenever the accumulated data warrant, is something to which New Zealand scientific societies such as the OSNZ could well give serious consideration.

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

SYSTEMATIC LIST

*BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophrys*

A juvenile seen off Puppy's Pt in July 1976 (MFS). Although this species is known to occur regularly at this latitude this appears to be the first record from Norfolk Island, the nearest published occurrence being one reported by Macdonald and Lawford about 145 km (90 miles) to the east in July 1951.

BLACK-WINGED PETREL *Pterodroma nigripennis*

One at Anson Bay on evening of 20 Nov 1979 (JL & MM).

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER *Puffinus pacificus*

Several recently killed carcasses of well grown fledglings in Mar 1978 (PD). Birds arriving at nest holes by 30 Oct 1979 (R & NP) and rafts of several thousands offshore by 14 Nov (JL & MM).

LITTLE SHEARWATER *P. assimilis*

A freshly killed, part eaten carcass at Kingston in Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP).

*BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster*

Single birds in flight off Pt Hunter on 11 July 1976 and Puppy's Pt on 13 Sept 1978 (MFS) and Cook memorial on 12 Nov 1980 (JL & MM).

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One in flight off Pt Hunter in July 1978 (EGT) still present on 10 Sept (MFS). There is only one other published record of this species.

*LITTLE PIED CORMORANT *P. melanoleucos*

One near Cook memorial on 3 Nov 1979 (R & NP).

*LESSER FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata ariel*

A female passing south off Anson Bay on 20 Nov 1979 made a half-hearted attack on rafting shearwaters (JL & MM). Although there are a few previous records of "frigatebirds" these have not been specifically identified.

WHITE-FACED HERON *Ardea novaehollandiae*

Four in Sept 1971 (FJT), eight in July 1976 and also recorded in Oct 1977 (MFS), three in Mar 1978 (PD), present in Sept 1978 (MFS), two in Oct and Nov 1979 and six in Nov 1980 (R & NP, JL & MM). Mainly around Kingston but two near the Melanesian Mission in 1978 and one here in 1980.

*WHITE-NECKED HERON *A. pacifica*

One at Kingston in July 1978 (EGT) still present on 10 and 12 Sept 1978 (MFS).

WHITE HERON *Egretta alba*

One at Kingston in July 1976 (MFS). This species has been recorded on only one (possibly two) previous occasion.

*CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Single birds near Kingston in July 1978 (EGT) and from 14 to 17 Nov 1980 (R & NP, JL & MM).

WHITE IBIS *Threskiornis mclucca*

One at Kingston in July 1976 (MFS) may have been the same bird as that seen in Nov 1975 and reported by McKean *et al.* as the first to be recorded on the island.

ROYAL SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Single birds at Kingston in Sept 1971 (FJT) and July 1976 (MFS) comprise only the third and fourth records for this species.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

A male and three females (plus a *platyrhynchos* X *superciliosa* hybrid) at Kingston in Sept 1971 (FJT) and seven in July 1976 (MFS). Also recorded here in Oct 1977 (MFS), July 1978 (EGT), Sept 1978 (MFS), two here in Oct 1979 (R & NP) and up to six in Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP). The 1971 record appears to be the first for Norfolk I., pre-dating the only previously published record by over 4 years.

BLACK (GREY) DUCK *A. superciliosa*

Recorded during all visits with five at Kingston in Sept 1971 (FJT), eleven near Headstone Pt. in Mar 1978 (PD), four at Kingston in Nov 1979 (JL & MM) and five here and two at the Melanesian Mission in Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP).

*BROWN GOSHAWK *Accipiter fasciatus*

One at Puppy's Pt in Sept 1978 (MFS).

NANKEEN KESTREL *Falco cenchroides*

Three at Kingston and two at Ball Bay on 17 July 1976 and at least two present in Oct 1977 (MFS). Single birds at Mt Pitt, Rocky Pt and between Kingston and Middlegate in Mar 1978 (PD). Two above Kingston in July 1978 (EGT) and a pair recorded in Sept 1978 (MFS). Singles at Headstone Pt, Stockyard Rd, and Anson Bay in Oct/Nov 1979 (R & NP, JL & MM). Single birds at Anson Pt, Steels Pt, and Selwyn Pine Rd in Nov 1980 with two near Kingston and also in the Cook memorial/Bird Rock area (JL & MM, R & NP). These records indicate a recent change in status from occasional vagrant to resident.

SPOTLESS CRAKE *Porzana tabuensis*

One at Cascade Creek, by New Cascade Rd, on 19 Nov 1980 in response to taped calls (JL & MM). This record, the first for many years, is of particular interest in view of recent conjecture by both Fullagar and de Ravin that the Norfolk Island population may have been exterminated by rats.

SWAMPHEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Recorded to the north of the airport in Sept 1971 (FJT). Present at the Melanesian Mission in July 1976, Oct 1977 and Sept 1978 (MFS), an adult with one chick here in Oct/Nov 1979 (R & NP) and two adults with two chicks in Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP). One near Headstone on 10 Nov 1980 (JL & MM).

*COOT *Fulica atra*

One at Kingston Common ponds in July 1978 (EGT).

*SPUR-WINGED PLOVER *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*

One near the Melanesian Mission from 7 to 18 Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP).

LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis fulva*

Two on 11 July 1976, eight on 9 Oct 1977 and 20 on 6 Sept 1978, all at Kingston (MFS). Very common at Kingston and also about the airfield, with flocks of up to 200, during Mar 1978 (PD). Up to 30 at Kingston from 28 Oct to 24 Nov 1979 (R & NP, JL & MM) with c.10 at the airfield in Nov (JL & MM). At least 120 at Kingston on 5 Nov 1980, reducing to c.50 by 20 Nov with c.20 at the airfield (JL & MM, R & NP).

DOUBLE-BANDED DOTTEREL *Charadrius bicinctus*

Eighteen at Kingston on 12 July 1976 (MFS) appears to be the only sighting since Wakelin's 1967 records.

MONGOLIAN DOTTEREL *C. mongolus*

One with *C. bicinctus* at Kingston on 12 July 1976 (MFS) is the second record for this species.

JAPANESE SNIPE *Gallinago hardwickii*

Two at Kingston from 6 to 16 Nov 1980 with three here on 10 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). Extremely close views were obtained,

permitting identification by the tail pattern. Two at the Melanesian Mission in Mar 1969 is the only previous record (Disney & Smithers).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Five in Sept 1971 (FJT), five on 11 July 1976, six on 9 Oct 1977 and two to five from 6 to 15 Sept 1978 (MFS), one on 7 Nov 1979 (R & NP), and up to three from 16 to 23 Nov (JL & MM). Present from 5 to 20 Nov 1980 with max. of four on 10 and 11 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). All records from Kingston/Slaughter Bay area, except one calling at Pt Howe on 22 Nov 1979.

EASTERN CURLEW *N. madagascariensis*

One at Kingston on 6, 7 and 12 Nov 1980 (JL & MM). Although stated by Disney & Smithers (1972) to be seen regularly on Norfolk Island, the only previous record is of two seen by them in Nov 1968 (Smithers & Disney 1969).

***HUDSONIAN GODWIT** *Limosa haemastica*

One at Kingston from 5 to 17 Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP). Although occurring regularly in New Zealand this appears to be the first recorded occurrence elsewhere in Australasia.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *L. lapponica*

One to two on 11 and 12 July 1976, two on 9 Oct 1977 and two on 14 Sept 1978 (MFS). Present also in Mar 1978 (PD), six on 29 Oct 1979 and up to four until 20 Nov (R & NP, JL & MM). At least ten from 5 to 20 Nov 1980 with c.20 on 8 to 10 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). All records from the Kingston area.

WANDERING TATTLER *Tringa incana*

Two on 9 Oct 1977 (MFS) and one at Pt Hunter on 15 Nov 1980 (JL & MM) identified by their call appear to be only the second and third records for this species.

GREY-TAILED TATTLER *T. brevipes*

One in Sept 1971 (FJT), one to two on 11 and 12 July 1976 and three on 16 Sept 1978 (MFS). One to three from 15 to 23 Nov 1979 with six on 20 Nov (JL & MM). One or two from 6 to 18 Nov 1980 with three on 8 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). All records from the Kingston/Slaughter Bay area. The 1971 bird, identified by its call, pre-dates previously published records for this species.

***TEREK SANDPIPER** *Xenus cinereus*

One at Kingston from 5 to 8 Nov 1980 (JL & MM).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Twelve in Sept 1971 (FJT), nine on 11 July 1976, 50+ on 9 Oct 1977 (MFS) and a few still here in Mar 1978 (PD), 60 to 70+ on 14 and 15 Sept 1978 (MFS). Present from 28 Oct to 7 Nov 1979 (R & NP) and up to 50 from 15 to 23 Nov (JL & MM), c.50 from 5 to 20 Nov 1980 with a maximum of c.90 on 9 and 10 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). All records from Kingston/Slaughter Bay area except one at Flat Rock and four at Rocky Pt in 1980.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Two at Kingston and Slaughter Bay on 28 Oct (R & NP) and 20 and 21 Nov 1979 (JL & MM). Two at Kingston from 5 to 16 Nov 1980, one until 18 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). Before these sightings, there appears to be only a single very old record.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER *C. acuminata*

One at Kingston Common on 19 and 22 Nov 1979 (JL & MM) and two from 5 to 20 Nov 1980 (JL & MM, R & NP). There is only a single published record, although McKean *et al.* quote a statement by Southwell that the species occurs annually in small numbers.

RED-NECKED STINT *C. ruficollis*

At Kingston Common one from 16 to 21 Nov 1979 (JL & MM) and three to five between 5 and 20 Nov 1980 with eight on 10 Nov (JL & MM, R & NP). Apparently only two (possibly three) previous records.

SILVER GULL *Larus novaehollandiae*

Two or three present during Mar 1978 (PD).

NORFOLK ISLAND PARAKEET***Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae verticalis***

Recorded in July 1976 and Oct 1977 (MFS), one in Mar 1978 (PD), present in July 1978 (EGT), up to four in Sept 1978 (MFS), present in Oct 1979 (R & NP) and three in Nov 1979 (JL & MM), up to nine in Nov 1980 (R & NP, JL & MM). All records from Mt Pitt Reserve/King Fern Valley area, except for one seen near Selwyn Pine Rd in July 1978 and birds heard at Rocky Pt Reserve in Oct 1979. Seen by EGT eating fruits of wild guava.

SHINING BRONZE CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

Heard on 18 Sept 1978 (MFS), on 21 Nov 1979, and 9 and 10 Nov 1980 (JL & MM).

BOOBOOK OWL *Ninox novaeseelandiae*

A "feeding table" containing remains of White Terns (*Gygis alba*) seen at Rocky Pt Reserve in Oct 1977 (MFS) was believed to be used by this species.

WELCOME SWALLOW *Hirundo tahitica neoxena*

Two seen on 9 July 1976 (MFS). Six at Mt Bates in Mar 1978 (PD), at least 50 over Kingston Common, and also seen at Mt Pitt in July 1978 (EGT), still quite common in Sept 1978 with 20+ at Kingston on 7 Sept (MFS). One to two at Kingston from 8 to 18 Nov 1980, and one near the Melanesian Mission on 18 Nov 1980 (JL & MM). Seen carrying mud, Sept 1978. There are only two published records for this species.

SCARLET ROBIN *Petroica multicolor*

Observations of families with fledged chicks in Oct 1977 (MFS) and Mar 1978 (PD) appear to indicate quite a prolonged breeding season.

LONG-BILLED WHITE-EYE *Zosterops tenuirostris*

Small parties, sometimes in company of *Z. lateralis*, seen in both original forest and secondary growth, lantana scrub, etc. (PD, JL & MM, MFS).

WHITE-BREADED WHITE-EYE *Z. albogularis*

Two seen on the saddle between Mt Pitt and Mt Bates on 11 Sept 1978 (MFS), and three seen and heard near Mt Bates between 15 and 19 Nov 1980 (JL & MM).

*INDIAN MYNA *Acridotheres tristis*

Recorded in Sept 1971 at Kingston and at the Settlement (FJT).

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JAMES L. MOORE, 32 Brook Street, Lower Hutt.



SHORT NOTE

STOAT WITH KIWI CHICK

On 19 September 1980, Mr R. Dawson of Te Anau was hunting in the Tutu Burn, South Fiord, Lake Te Anau, when he saw a stoat (*Mustela erminea*) dragging a dead kiwi chick by the neck. When approached the stoat dropped the bird and ran off. The kiwi smelt badly and R. Dawson thought the bird had been dead for a few days. There were no signs to show how the kiwi died nor did Mr Dawson know where or how the stoat had got the bird.

This observation was made in beech forest on the side of the valley (375 m a.s.l.) grid reference NZMS 1 S140/589266.

The kiwi chick, identified as South Island Brown Kiwi (*Apteryx australis australis*) is now in the National Museum collection. An examination of the bird has not established the cause of death (J. A. Bartle, pers. comm.).

KIM MORRISON, Fiordland National Park, Box 29, Te Anau