

## SHORT NOTES

### GREY-BACKED STORM PETREL ON ROUTEBURN TRACK

On 5 November 1982 at about 10 p.m., Dean Sander found an unusual bird on the verandah of Lake Howden Hut (708 m) in Fiordland. The bird was in good condition. At the time there was a strong NW wind, heavily overcast sky and complete darkness. The only light in the hut was from a Tilley lantern.

On 6 November I collected the bird and noted these features: size the same as a South Island Robin (with which I am very familiar); charcoal-grey head, upper back, throat and upper breast; silver-grey lower back and rump; white from the lower breast to the undertail coverts; white underwing with a dark border on the leading edge; black long legs; black webbed feet; short dark bill with prominent nostril tubes. I identified the bird as a Grey-backed Storm Petrel (*Garrodia nereis*) from Harper & Kinsky's 'Southern Albatrosses and Petrels' (1978).

In the afternoon I released the petrel at Milford Sound in calm conditions. The bird repeatedly dipped its head in the sea before swimming and fluttering across the sound.

KIM MORRISON, Box 29, Te Anau



### WHY IS THE KIWI SO CALLED ?

In *Notornis* 28: 216-217 Rogan Colbourne speculated on the origin of the name *kiwi* as applied to the New Zealand birds, and made the point, surely noticed by others, that the name is not particularly onomatopoeic in its New Zealand context. While in Hawaii I had occasion to consult a Hawaiian dictionary and noticed that *kiwi* in that dialect means "bent" (the example given being "as in a horn of an animal").

Therefore, it seems logical that the dialectal variation *kivi* is used by the Cook Islanders as their name for the Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*). Presumably the same word was applied by the original human inhabitants of New Zealand as a name for *Apteryx* for the same reason. However, the Hawaiian name for the Bristle-thighed Curlew is *kioea*, and *kiwi* is not used as a bird name in Hawaii, the nearest being *'iwi* or just *iwi*, which means reddish; and in fact, the *'iwi* (*Vestiaria coccinea*) is the reddest of all the honeycreepers and also has a curved bill. "Bent" or "curved" in Maori is *piko* or *tiwhana*.

I, like Rogan Colbourne, look forward to further comments on this matter.

GORDON R. WILLIAMS, Department of Entomology, Lincoln College,  
Canterbury