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CENSUSES OF LAKES OF NORTH KAIPARA

By H. R. McKENZIE

ABSTRACT

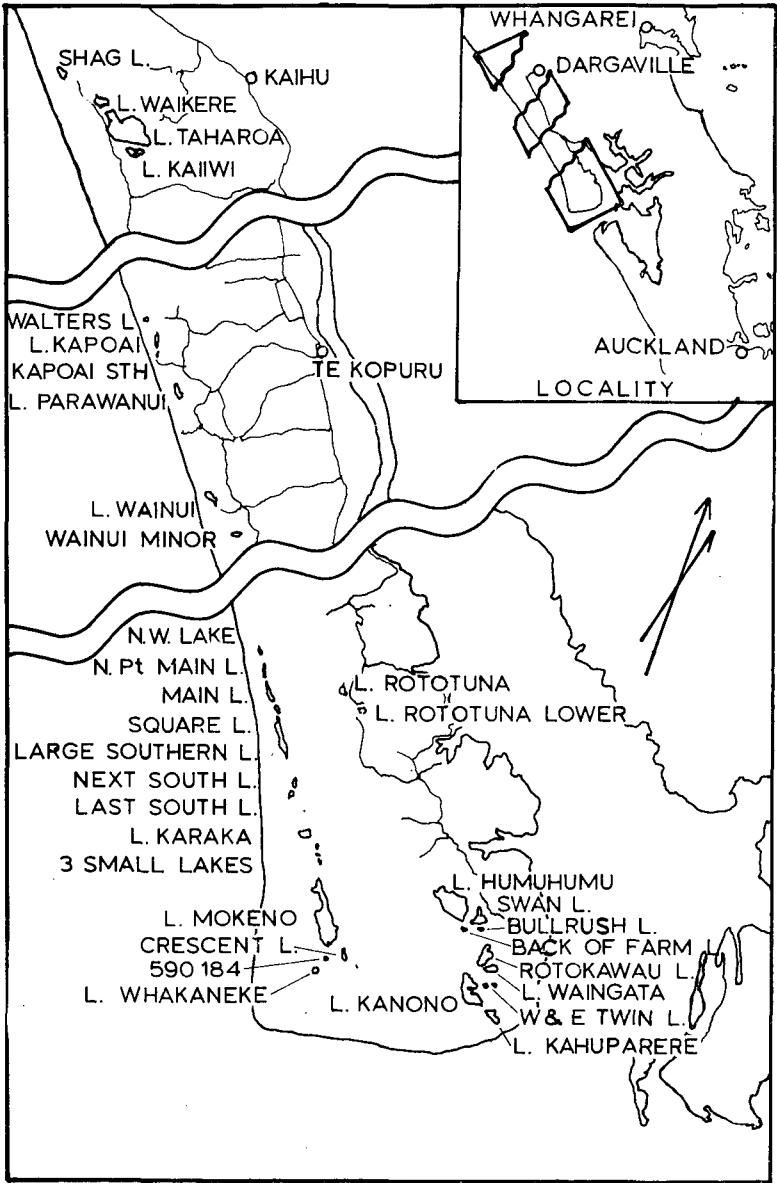
In March 1956 and March 1958 members of OSNZ made bird censuses of lakes in the North Kaipara area from Poutu to west of Kaihu. The results are tabulated. Poor weather and shortage of trained observers may have caused low counts. There were few Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Lack of habitat is suggested as the reason for low numbers of Pied Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) and Pukeko (*Porphyrio melanotus*) but Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) were relatively numerous. White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*) and Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) were not found.

INTRODUCTION

The study area was from Poutu in the south to the group of lakes west of Kaihu (Fig. 1). This attenuated line of lakes, ponds and swamps was to be covered by allotting portions of it to parties of OSNZ members and friends. The recruiting and organising was carried out by J. C. Davenport and myself. Volunteers came from as far north as Kawakawa and as far south as Waiuku, arriving by car on the Fridays and returning on the Sundays.

10 March 1956

The weather on the Saturday was partly fine at first, but there was much wind and rain late in the day. Teams were allocated to tasks according to physical and ornithological ability. It was found that few of even the more highly trained members were well versed in the water birds, and so the experience was extremely valuable. The counts were not a complete success because some of the larger southern lakes were unavoidably not fully covered and in other areas conditions



for observation were far from suitable. The rough water on the large lakes made it difficult to see such birds as Dabchick (*Podiceps rufopectus*) and to separate Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*) and ducks in the large mixed flocks. Only the lakes listed in Table 1 were censused. Some species were observed still to have young with them. The numbers of young birds seen are therefore recorded separately in the tables.

9 March 1957

This attempt failed. Heavy rain set in on the Friday evening and lasted to the Sunday morning. Nothing could be done. It was worrying to waste our time after travelling so far but it was very heartening when one after another came and asked about trying again the next year.

On the way home on the Sunday a good variety of birds was studied at the Rototuna lakes and most of the party called in at Waipu and saw some Brown Teal (*Anas chlorotis*).

D. G. McMillan mistook the date and visited the Kaihu lakes the next week in fine weather. His totals for the group were 65 Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), 5 Dabchicks (*Podiceps rufopectus*), 23 Little Shags (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*) and 1 Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*).

1 March 1958

This third attempt to obtain a census was very frustrating, some members being hindered by car trouble and others by illness, while the flood conditions from heavy rains a week earlier had scattered the birds and allowed some to hide in flooded swamps. The great amount of extra water was a particularly severe handicap for identifying distant birds. Very long distances of rough walking were covered by most. In spite of the difficulties a good count was obtained.

All the lakes named in Fig. 1 were censused but some had no birds and so are not included in Table 2.

SPECIES SEEN

The following observations are in addition to the data contained in Tables 1 and 2.

NEW ZEALAND DABCHICK *Podiceps rufopectus*

The two counts were similar but may not be the totals because of the difficulty with rough water.

PIED SHAG *Phalacrocorax varius varius*

Possibly breeds at Shag Lake.

LITTLE BLACK SHAG *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

Probably some were misidentified as Little Shag in 1956.

TABLE 1 — North Kaipara lakes census 10 March 1956

LAKES	DABCHICK	SHAG SPP.	BLACK SHAG	PIED SHAG	LITTLE SHAG	BLACK SWAN	MALLARD DUCK	GREY DUCK	SHOVELLER DUCK	SCAUP
KAIHU GROUP										
SHAG	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-
WAIKERE	-	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TAHAROA	-	-	1	6	4	-	-	-	-	-
KAIWI	1	-	1	-	8	-	-	24	-	-
TE KOPURU GROUP										
WALTERS	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	45	-	-
KAPOAI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
KAPOAI SOUTH	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
PARAWANUI	-	-	10	4	-	-	-	5	-	-
TANGITIKI GROUP										
ROTOTUNA	3	-	12	-	9	-	-	80	-	2
ROTOTUNA LOWER	6	-	18	-	6	2+3y	-	72	5	2
NORTHWEST	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	14	-	-
NORTH PART MAIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-
MAIN	-	-	4	-	-	2+6y	-	44	2	4
LARGE SOUTHERN	2+2y	-	4	-	1	2	-	14	-	6+4y
NEXT SOUTH	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
LAST SOUTH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-
POUTO EAST GROUP										
HUMUHUMU	6	-	-	-	-	2+5y	-	122	-	-
SWAN	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
BACK OF FARM	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	17	-	-
ROTKAWAU	-	-	6	-	8	2	5	40	-	-
WAINGATA	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-
KANONO	9	58	-	-	-	7	-	80	-	200
WEST TWIN	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	13	-	-
EAST TWIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50+12y	-	-
KAHUPARERE	7	-	2	-	1	5	-	2	-	-
POUTO WEST GROUP										
MOKENO	1+1y	-	6	-	4	10	-	106	2	60
TOTALS	37+3y	113	69	10	44	32+14y	6	824+12y	9	274+4y

LITTLE SHAG *Phalacrocorax melanoleucus brevirostris*

Probably breeds spasmodically. On 13 April 1965 HMMcK and HRMcK visited a colony of disused nests in drowned tea-tree on the shores of Lake Kanono where c. 35 came in to roost that evening, with 3 Little Black Shags.

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris poiciloptilus*

16 seen in 1956 and 13 in 1958 are good counts compared with other parts of the country.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

6 in 1956 and 1 in 1958 presumably indicated that it had not yet reached Northland in numbers.

GREY DUCK *Anas superciliosa*

The species made up more than 60% of the population. A further 8 ducks in 1956 and 316 in 1958 were recorded as "un-identified." The species composition of these flocks was probably similar to the identified birds.

TABLE 2 — North Kaipara lakes census 1 March 1958

LAKES	DABCHICK	SHAG SPP.	BLACK SHAG	PIED SHAG	LITTLE BLACK SHAG	LITTLE SHAG	BLACK SWAN	MALLARD DUCK	GREY DUCK	SHOVELLER DUCK	SCAUP
KAIHU GROUP											
SHAG	5+2y	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	23	-	-
TAHAROA	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
KAIWI	5	-	-	-	3	9	-	105	-	-	-
TE KOPURU GROUP											
WAINUI	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	6	-	-	-
WAINUI MINOR	-	-	2	-	1	23	-	14	-	-	-
KAPOAI	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	27	-	-	-
TANGITIKI GROUP											
ROTOTUNA	4	-	2	-	-	50	1	-	-	-	-
ROTOTUNA LOWER	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	28	3	-
NORTHWEST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
MAIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8+2y
SQUARE	-	-	-	-	-	-	2+7y	60	-	-	-
LARGE SOUTHERN	-	-	-	-	-	-	2+4y	12	-	-	30
NEXT SOUTH	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
LAST SOUTH	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	-	-	-
POUTO EAST GROUP											
HUMUHUMU	13	-	-	-	4	6	7	100	2	80	-
SWAN	-	-	2	-	-	-	6	1	-	-	-
ROTKAWAU	-	9	-	-	-	-	2	17	-	12	-
WAINGATA	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
KANONO	4	30	-	1	-	-	16+4y	-	-	-	2
KAHUPARERE	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	4	-	-	-
POUTO WEST GROUP											
KARAKA	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MOKENO	3	-	5	-	1	3	33	178	-	-	3+5y
CRESCENT	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	8	-	-	-
590 184	4+1y	-	1	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	-
WHAKANEKE	-	-	-	5	-	-	53	50	-	-	-
TOTALS	40+3y	39	13	8	14	101	134+15y	1	711	5	145+7y

BROWN TEAL *Anas aucklandica chlorotis*

2 suspected, but not confirmed, on Large Southern Lake, N32/540295, in the Tangitiki Group.

PUKEKO *Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*

This bird was relatively scarce in the area. The absence of a count in 1956 was due to the term "Water birds" being used when the scheme was being prepared. The same applies to the Pied Stilt.

PIED STILT *Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus*

The 1958 count indicates the unsuitable nature of the lakes and swamps with their clean sand and stiff rushes.

NORTH ISLAND FERNBIRD *Bowdleria punctata vealeae*

3 in 1956 and 1 in 1958 does not indicate the true population. Good weather and work in the late evening would have produced quite high figures.

RAILS Rallidae

Small rails were reported by residents to be present but the species could not be identified.

By today's birding standards we would expect to see White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*) and Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica neoxena*) in this area. None was recorded during our visits.

It is good to know that further census work on the area is being carried out by Northland members of OSNZ, led by D. E. Crockett. This area is a fruitful field which is worthy of concentrated and sustained study.

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H. R. McKENZIE, 21 Estuary Road, Weymouth, Manurewa