

**REVIEW**

Review of "*Sounds of New Zealand Birds, Volume One*," a disc by Les McPherson.

For two reasons it was a great pleasure to review this disc of New Zealand birds: first, it is of excellent quality; and second, it was prepared by an amateur relatively new to the field. New Zealand needs more recordists; amateurs have contributed much in many sciences, and the advent of Mr. McPherson (an O.S.N.Z. member) will provide some needed augmentation to work now being done by the Wildlife Branch and less than a handful of others.

The disc is 45 rpm extended play and covers ten species. An Uher 4000L recorder, operating at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches per second tape speed, was used in conjunction with an AKG D200E microphone on Agfa PE65 and EMI 99/9 tapes, and in a twenty-inch parabolic reflector on some of the recordings.

To be severely critical, there is a bit of wind noise against the microphone in House Sparrow and Starling cuts (the first two), but this is minor and does not distract. The Song Thrush is well done with no over-recording, an easy fault with loud-volume, high-frequency songs (which he may find harder to avoid when he gets to the Robin and Hedge Sparrow on  $7\frac{1}{2}$  speed). The Stewart Island Weka is characteristic; and the South Island Saddleback I had never heard before. The latter was recorded in heavy rain which is quite audible, but the second half of the cut has less rain and a different vocalization which, to me, seems distinct from North Island Saddleback tapes I have heard. The Red-billed Gull again is typical; and the Shy Mollymawk, too, with the latter containing water noises about the boat where the bird was recorded, but this is not objectionable. The two Oystercatcher species are well done, as is the Sooty Shearwater in and out of its burrow.

The South Island Saddleback and Shy Mollymawk will not be found in many New Zealand collections.

Mr. McPherson has set up his proprietorship, "McPherson Natural History Unit," at P.O. Box 21083, Edgeware, Christchurch, the only place where the disc presently is available. Its price is \$1.40, indeed a reasonable charge.

My experience since 1958 in recording birds indicated it was easier for me to earn a living in another field and donate my tapes. So I hope Mr. McPherson will be as successful financially as he has been electronically; or at least that his receipts will materially reduce his equipment and travel costs. The Uher is a high-quality, high-priced machine. So is the microphone. The cost of recording equipment in New Zealand certainly is the greatest factor limiting the use of this valuable ornithological tool outside government departments where the high duty does not have to be paid. Tape, too, is two to three times the cost charged at retail in countries of manufacture, which unfortunately encourages most amateur Kiwi recordists to use the slow speeds of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches per second to save tape at the expense of fidelity.

Mr. McPherson deserves the encouragement of ornithologists for his initial effort, plus their hope that he will go on and add more, particularly of as-yet-unrecorded species. When one remembers that Johannes Andersen, back in 1912, recorded over 70 Tui vocalizations

on musical score pads, with the aid of a pitchpipe, four decades before tape recorders, it is clear how much work still remains to be done on the common species.

An understanding interpretation by trained behaviorists is another need. New Zealand, like other island communities well away from continental land masses, has an avifauna more specialized morphologically and behaviorally than the continents. This provides exceptional opportunities for study not available on the continents and certainly in need of more systematic and trained pursuit from the behaviour standpoint where the tape recordist, with careful documentation, can help the behaviorist.

As tape recording grows in New Zealand, it would be well to have the tapes, now spread around various government departments and private homes, located in one central library, documented, filed and catalogued in taxonomical order, with ready playback available for students and for revision and updating of field guides.

— Wm. V. WARD



## NOTICE

### ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION 1971 CONGRESS

The R.A.O.U. will be holding its 1971 Congress in Auckland from October 30 to November 2. The venue will be the Auckland War Memorial Museum. The programme for the Congress will be as follows:

#### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30 —

Afternoon: Scientific papers.

Evening: Cocktails and official opening, including President's address.

#### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31 —

Morning and Afternoon: Scientific papers.

Evening: Films.

#### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1 —

Field outing on Hauraki Gulf.

#### TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2 —

Morning and Afternoon: Scientific papers.

The Congress will be open to all interested persons on the payment of the registration fee of \$10 which covers all. This must be paid before July 31. Scientific papers will be accepted from non-members of the R.A.O.U. on the understanding that members' papers will have to have preference and that the Organising Committee will retain the right to accept or decline any paper. Intention to present a paper must be sent to B. D. Bell, C/o Wildlife Service, with a short abstract for inclusion in the Congress programme, not later than July 31.

Congress registration is to be paid to Miss Hutson, 90 Korokoro Road, Petone, New Zealand.

B. D. BELL  
for New Zealand Organising Committee  
R.A.O.U. Congress