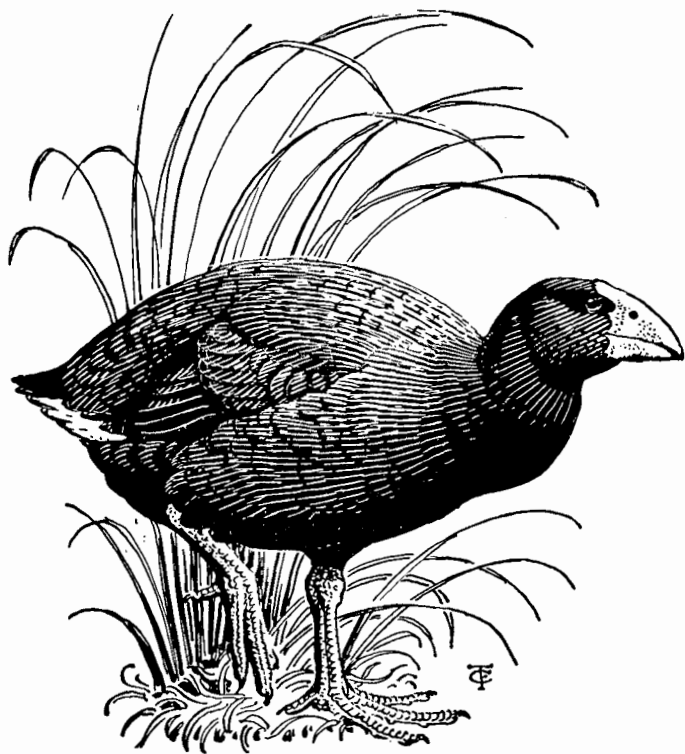


VOL. 6. No. 1.

JULY, 1954.

NOTORNIS



BULLETIN OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY.

NOTORNIS

In continuation of New Zealand Bird Notes.

Bulletin of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

(Incorporated.)

Registered with the G.P.O., Wellington, as a Magazine.

Edited by R. H. D. STIDOLPH, 114 Cole Street, Masterton.

Annual Subscription, 7/6 (Juniors, 5/-); Endowment Membership, 10/-;

Life Membership, £6/6/-.

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MR. E. G. TURBOTT, Auckland

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BANDED RAIL NESTING IN AUCKLAND SUBURB.—A friend of mine has a garden which slopes down to Portland Road, Remuera. Across the road is a small tidal creek and a swampy flat, a corner of which has already been filled in. When scything the long grass at the bottom of his section, he laid bare a nest of seven attractively marked eggs. Having only an epicurean interest in eggs my friend ate all of them except one! The remaining egg was rescued from the refrigerator and submitted by the writer to Mr. A. W. B. Powell, of the Auckland Institute, who said at once that it came from a nest of the New Zealand banded rail (*Rallus philippensis assimilis*). Mr. Powell said further that he had known of the existence of banded rail in that area and they fed, he said, on marine insects among the stunted mangroves which grow in that corner of Hobsons Bay. The eggs were discovered on 3/3/54 which might indicate a final attempt on the part of the birds to rear a family, after failing to do so earlier in the season. Auckland naturalists will be interested to know that in spite of rats, cats, hedgehogs, dogs and humans, this shy and comparatively rare native bird still survives within an easy ten minutes' drive of the roar of Queen Street traffic.—J. A. Fagan, Auckland.

ANNUAL MEETING.

Between 50 and 60 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.) from various parts of New Zealand assembled in the Library of the Auckland War Memorial Museum on May 21, 1954, for the 14th annual general meeting. The chair was taken by the retiring president of the society, Mr. R. B. Sibson.

The annual report was read by the secretary, Mr. F. M. Brookfield, and was adopted by the meeting. Separate reports, which also were adopted, were read by the treasurer, Miss N. Macdonald, by the convener of the Ringing Committee, Mr. P. C. Bull, and by Mr. Sibson, on behalf of the librarian, Mr. Turbott.

In accordance with the ballot held at the previous annual general meeting, the positions of president, treasurer and secretary had now become vacant. The only nominations received were those of Mr. H. R. McKenzie, Miss N. Macdonald and Mr. F. M. Brookfield, who were accordingly declared elected as president, treasurer and secretary respectively.

Mr. Sibson made particular mention of the services to the society of the late Mrs. Tily, who was South Island vice-president at the time of her death, and also of Mr. J. M. Cunningham, the former secretary. On the motion of Mr. P. C. Bull, the meeting requested the council to recommend Mr. Cunningham for honorary life-membership in recognition of his work.

Mr. D. N. Chambers was re-elected auditor and was thanked by the meeting for his services.

After the formal business of the meeting was completed, films of a very high and enjoyable standard were shown by Dr. R. A. Falla and by Mr. G. Moon. The meeting expressed its thanks to these members and also to the acting-director of the museum for the use of its facilities for the evening.

FIELD EXCURSIONS.

On the morning immediately following the annual meeting, Saturday, May 22—about ten car-loads of members set out for Bethells Beach, mainly for the purpose of viewing the spotted shag colony. Unfortunately some heavy rain marred the day and relatively little of interest was seen. Several of the cars travelling via Waitakere found the road impassable and were compelled to carry on to Muriwai, but they were scarcely more successful there than those who had reached Bethells by a route unknown to the Muriwai party. For all of us, however, the day was not without that peculiar enjoyment that always comes with wind and rough weather.

The following day was much better, both ornithologically and meteorologically. Members travelled by car to the Firth of Thames where they were rewarded by seeing part of the flock of wintering wrybill plover and the usual wintering flocks of godwit, knots and South Island pied oystercatchers. Two turnstones and a New Zealand dotterel were also seen.

ANNUAL REPORT.

The fourteenth annual report, for the year ended March 31, 1954, stated:—

General.—In this, the first complete year of the society's existence as a corporate body, the new constitution has continued to function smoothly. The work of the society has generally been carried on quietly but efficiently and the progress of previous years consolidated. As examples of the activities of members we mention further bird-census work carried out at Dunedin and at Auckland, the shining cuckoo and white heron investigations still in progress and the exhibitions under the auspices of the museums of bird photographs taken by some of our members. Ringing activities have continued and will be the subject of a special report by the convener of the Ringing Committee.

Officers.—At the beginning of the year the members of the council were as follow:—President, Mr. R. B. Sibson; South Island vice-president, Mrs. I. Tily; North Island vice-president, Mr. H. R. McKenzie; secretary,

Mr J. M. Cunningham; treasurer, Miss N. Macdonald; editor of "Notornis," Mr. R. H. D. Stidolph; librarian, Mr. E. G. Turbott; Mrs. L. E. Walker and Dr. R. A. Falla.

We sadly record the death of Mrs. Tily, the South Island vice-president, which took place in March, 1954, at Dunedin. Mention will be made of her generous service to the society and to New Zealand ornithology generally in the address of the retiring president.

Mr. J. M. Cunningham resigned from the secretaryship in the course of the year, his resignation taking effect from the end of October. Mr. Cunningham is another officer to whom the society owes much. For seven years he carried the double burden of the secretary-treasurership and he has well earned a respite from council duties. The council appointed in his place Mr. F. M. Brookfield.

Mr. Turbott left in December for an absence of several months in Europe. He was appointed by the council officially to represent the society at the Eleventh International Ornithological Congress, which will begin in Basel, Switzerland, on May 29th, 1954. In Mr. Turbott's absence the president has been acting as librarian.

During the year the council succeeded in filling most of the positions of regional organisers. The following districts are each still without one:—Wellington, Taranaki, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and North Auckland. The regional organiser is, of course, a very necessary officer for each district; without him the activities of members will be unco-ordinated and perhaps spasmodic. Progress will be slower and enthusiasms, particularly of any newly-joined members, will flag. The council is anxious that suitable people will be found to fill the vacancies as soon as possible.

Membership.—This stood at the end of the financial year at 772 compared with 682 last year. The treasurer's report will give details of these figures.

Publications.—This year saw the accomplishment of two publishing ventures undertaken by the society: the reprint under the title "Reports and Bulletins" of the cyclo-styled issues of 1939-40, and—more notable, of course—the publication of "Checklist of N.Z. Birds," which was the work of the Checklist Committee convened by Dr. C. A. Fleming. The "Checklist" has generally been very well received. At least four reviews, all of them favourable on the whole, have so far appeared in overseas ornithological journals. The editors of three Continental journals have requested and been sent copies for review.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

Membership of the society now stands at 772, 53 of these being life members, 476 ordinary members paying 7s. 6d per annum, 46 junior members paying 5s. per annum, 181 endowment members paying 10s. a year, and 16 complimentary members to whom copies of Notornis are sent free. These latter include certain libraries and lighthouse-keepers. Seventy members were unfinancial on March 31, representing the sum of £33 10s., as compared with £8 10s. for last year. There were 22 resignations. Although on the face of it the society's financial position appears good, it must be pointed out that the large credit this year is due not so much to an increased number of subscriptions but to profits from various publications by the society in the past year. These profits will not recur to any great extent. Profit from the sales of the Checklist was £24 1s. 11d. on the printing of 500 copies, which were mostly sold to members at the pre-publication price of 7s. 6d. each. Similarly, a profit of £71 17s. was made on the sales of the cyclostyled reprint of Reports and Bulletins. The total from subscriptions for the year amounted to £263 3s. 6d., while the total from sales of Checklist, Takahe and Reports and Bulletins was £144 16s. 4d. Donations for the year totalled £14 1s. 6d. The printing of Notornis cost the society £188 10s. 1d., while the greatest increase in expenditure was £22 14s. 1d. for postages as a result of the increased postal rates and the extra publications posted to members. The importance of

early payment of subscriptions cannot be too strongly stressed because every account sent out costs the society much-needed money, and when three or four reminders have to be sent during the year the costs mount up. The society's most grateful thanks are due to all who have sent donations during the year; also to Mr. D. N. Chambers for auditing the books.—Noelle Macdonald, hon. treasurer.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT to 31st March, 1954.

INCOME			EXPENDITURE		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Subs., 1953 and Arrears	276	13 6	Printing "Notornis," Vol. 5, Nos. 5 to 8	188	10 1
Donations, General and Illustrations Fund	14	1 6	Envelopes	12	12 1
Sales—			Stationery	10	4 8
Back Numbers	32	4 0	Ringling Stationery	1	0 0
"Takahe" issue	1	14 0	Exchange	1	9 11
Checklist	39	1 5	Postages	50	0 5
Reprint Cyclostyled Issues	71	17 0	General	10	14 4
Interest, P.O.S.B.	8	17 0	Balance Inc. Expenses	7	11 3
			Depreciation, Plant	3	1 8
			Excess of Income over Expenditure, to General Reserve	159	4 0
	<u>£444</u>	<u>8 5</u>		<u>£444</u>	<u>8 5</u>

BALANCE SHEET as at 31st March, 1954.

LIABILITIES.			ASSETS.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Subs. paid in Advance	50	7 6	Stocks on hand, 31/3/54	130	4 0
Life Members' Subs.	187	13 0	Subs. in Arrears, estimated to realise	13	10 0
Sundry Creditors	20	10 0	Sundry Debtors	15	0 0
Ringling Fund	25	0 0	Plant, less depreciation	36	0 1
General Reserve	336	3 6	Bank of New Zealand	36	8 2
			P.O. Savings Bank	402	16 9
	<u>£619</u>	<u>14 0</u>		<u>£619</u>	<u>14 0</u>

(A more detailed statement of accounts, certified by Mr. D. N. Chambers, was presented to the annual general meeting.)

LIBRARY REPORT.

In the absence of Mr. E. G. Turbott, the Library report will be very brief. Our collection of books, periodicals and pamphlets is growing rapidly. We are grateful to Miss Evans who has found time to arrange and catalogue them. Since last year 48 new items have been added and the number of borrowings has increased from 65 to 103. The Library Committee would be grateful if borrowers would return books as soon as they have finished with them. At present the binding of some complete volumes is held up because odd issues have been away too long. As the number of foreign ornithological journals increases it appears that most of the annual library grant will be spent on binding.

RINGING COMMITTEE REPORT.

The report of the Ringing Committee for the year ended March 31, 1954, stated: The society's ringing scheme continues to develop satisfactorily. Nineteen operators have between them ringed 3067 birds of 21 species, and there have been 178 recoveries. The number of birds ringed and the number of recoveries exceed all previous yearly totals, and this, together with previous work, has resulted in important advances in our knowledge of the movements and behaviour of several species of birds—knowledge which could not have been obtained by any other means. A summary of the birds ringed and recovered during the year ended March 31, 1954, is supplied separately.

The increasing number of birds ringed and recovered has caused a corresponding increase in recording work, and the Ringing Committee is grateful to Mr. Moreland, of the Dominion Museum, for the considerable amount of time he has devoted to this work. If ringing activity continues to expand in this way some assistance with the recording work will be

required from members. At present there are still some operators who cause unnecessary work by asking for supplies of rings at short notice, by not filling in their schedules correctly or by failing to forward them promptly.

The excessive wear shown by the society's rings when used on certain species continues to cause concern. It appears that the fitting of rings too loosely is at least partly to blame for this, and the matter is receiving further study. The manufacturers advise that they now have a specially resistant type of ring for use on waterfowl, and it is hoped to obtain some of these for trial next season. It is also intended to investigate further the possibility of getting more satisfactory rings from other sources.

A change of policy has been made with regard to ringing permits. Under the new policy each operator has his own individual permit which specifies the species he may ring. This method allows the Ringing Committee more freedom to make allowances for the special requirements of individual research projects and at the same time ensures a better control of ringing activities. The society's permit to handle certain protected birds for the purpose of ringing, granted by the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, is conditional on the scheme being properly controlled, and such control is clearly in the interests of the operators themselves. All active ringing operators have now received their individual permits together with an instruction leaflet explaining the new scheme and incorporating certain technical recommendations with regard to bird ringing. Other members requiring copies of this leaflet (No. 4) may obtain them from the convener of the Ringing Committee.

All recovery cards held up to March 31, 1953, have now been duplicated and the duplicate set is held by the Auckland Museum. The Ringing Committee is grateful to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research for assistance with the typing of these cards.

In 1951 the Ringing Committee sent a quantity of the society's rings to the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition because that organisation had insufficient time to procure its own rings before the departure of personnel to Heard Island. The Australian authorities provided dollars for a new supply of rings to be sent from America so that our stocks would be fully replenished. Before the New Zealand rings had all been used the Australians managed to obtain a supply of rings bearing their own inscription, and the fairly substantial unexpended balance of New Zealand rings has recently been returned to us as a gift. This generous action is very much appreciated.—P. C. Bull, convener of the Ringing Committee.

ALBINO KOKAKO NEAR PAEROA.—It was the good fortune of my brother, H. J. Morgan, of Rarotonga, and myself during a tramp in the bush on 7th January, 1954, to see at close quarters an albino kokako (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*) or blue-wattled crow. We were in the ranges between Waitekauri and Paeroa and had had lunch on a ridge at a height of 1600 feet above sea level when my brother decided to see which birds he could call. Very soon we were visited by warblers, pied tits, fantails, tuis and then a kokako. Within a few minutes of seeing the first kokako we saw an albino kokako. We observed both birds for approximately 25 minutes and they came to within 15 feet of us. The albino was three parts white and one part slate grey. Of the tail feathers one, or perhaps two, were all grey while the rest were pure white. The colour of the bill was a light orange. The albino was the more curious of the two and kept calling "took! took! took!" Oliver ("New Zealand Birds," p. 502) states that albinos have been obtained in the Rimutaka mountains, and the Wairarapa district. This must have been many years ago, when the kokako was plentiful, as there have been no reports of its being found in those places recently. It, therefore, appears that this present case of albinism is of particular interest.—H. L. Morgan, Paeroa.