

# NOTORNIS

VOLUME SIX, NUMBER FIVE : JULY NINETEEN FIFTY-FIVE

---

## EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of *Notornis* to appear under new editorship. In 1946 Mr R. H. D. Stidolph succeeded Professor B. J. Marples and Dr R. A. Falla as editor of *New Zealand Bird Notes*. Under his skillful direction that modest publication grew into *Notornis*, which now holds its place among the recognized ornithological periodicals of the world. Bob Stidolph was well qualified for the task of editor. As an active field naturalist he had contributed several papers to *The Emu* and more recently he added the Least Sandpiper to the New Zealand list; and as a journalist he knew most of the tricks of the printer's and publisher's trades. The Society owes him a debt which cannot easily be paid and wishes him a long retirement with many opportunities of watching birds without the burden of having to produce *Notornis* punctually four times a year.

Your new editor enters upon his duties with some diffidence. The high standard set by his predecessors has to be maintained. Occasions may arise when the publication of contributions has to be deferred till they have been critically examined. Even so, published papers may contain statements which do not tally with the experiences of other observers, and it is hoped that a vigorous correspondence column may further the interests of critical ornithology. Short communications are always welcome.

The change of editor has involved a change of publisher. The Society is grateful for the help it has received for nearly ten years from the Masterton Printing Company Ltd, and looks forward to a period of happy co-operation with the Pilgrim Press of Auckland.

The honorary secretary of the Society leaves for Europe in June and takes our good wishes with him. During his absence Mr E. G. Turbott has consented to act as secretary. Correspondence should be addressed to him at the War Memorial Museum, Auckland. Jock Brookfield will be away for about a year. We are delighted to hear that when he returns he will resume his position as secretary.

## FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 1954-5

### OFFICERS:

After the last Annual General Meeting Council members were:

President: Mr H. R. McKenzie

Editor: Mr R. H. D. Stidolph

Treasurer: Miss N. Macdonald

Secretary: Mr F. M. Brookfield

Mrs L. E. Walker, Dr R. A. Falla and Mr E. G. Turbott

Two positions, those of the South Island and North Island vice-presidents, were vacant, and in terms of the Constitution had to be filled by resolution of the Council. Mrs L. E. Walker and Mr P. C. Bull were appointed accordingly to the respective vacancies. Mrs Walker had been due to retire as a Councillor at the present Annual General Meeting, and we are obliged to Mr L. Gurr, who, for the time that remained, filled the vacancy caused by her promotion.

It is proper to record here our thanks to Mr R. H. D. Stidolph, who at this Annual General Meeting retires from the editorship, after having held it for eight years. The high standard maintained in *Notornis* is very largely due to his devoted and efficient service.

We report with regret the death last December of the Reverend F. H. Robertson, a committee member and Hawke's Bay Regional Organizer from 1948 to 1952. He deserved well of the Society, and Hawke's Bay members in particular will miss him.

#### REGIONAL ORGANIZERS:

The Council acknowledges the assistance given by these officers during the year. The vacancies in their ranks are slowly being filled and still exist for North Auckland (as distinct from the Far North), Waikato, Taranaki, and Bay of Plenty.

#### MEMBERSHIP:

This stood at the end of the financial year at 772, comprising 720 New Zealand and 52 overseas members. Further details of these figures are given in the Treasurer's Report.

#### ACTIVITIES:

The Society's affairs and activities have continued more or less evenly during the past year. Group activities follow the familiar course of lecture-meetings, censuses and some combined ringing work. 'Short Notes', printed in the January issue of *Notornis*, continue to show in classified form the valuable and informative results of the field work of individual members. The number of contributors on this occasion (the period being 1953-54) was 100, as compared with 112 for 1952-53, 98 for 1951-52, and 99 for 1950-51. It will be seen that only about one member in seven is represented in 'Short Notes'. This may perhaps be due in part to insufficient publicity of this feature in other issues. Whatever may be the reasons, the Council hopes that those active field observers whose work has not been so recorded in the past will this year supply their respective Regional Organizers with short notes before mid-August for inclusion in the next January issue.

The several special inquiries continue. Interim reports will appear in *Notornis*.

#### PUBLICATIONS:

The bringing of the editorship from Masterton to Auckland necessitates a change in printers also. The Society has had most cordial and satisfactory relations with the Masterton Printing Company Ltd, and we hope to establish the same with its successor.

#### BIRD STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND:

Only a very few copies of this pamphlet remain and a reprint is necessary. During the year a committee consisting of the president, the retiring editor, Mr R. B. Sibson, the treasurer and the secretary have attended to the revision, which was a little more radical than had at first been thought necessary. The revised draft is in the hands of the Masterton Printing Company, this being the company's last work for the Society.

### LIBRARY REPORT for the year ending 31 March 1955

After a considerable increase in the number of borrowings in 1954, the total has fallen to 60 during the past year. At the same time, current issues of the main journals have been circulated as before within groups of members and this scheme has enabled our resources to be used fairly effectively. During the year twelve new books and pamphlets have been added to the Library.

The Library Committee has established exchange during the period 1953 - 55 with several leading overseas journals which form important additions to the Library: *Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* (Danish, with English summaries), *Der Ornithologische Beobachter* (journals of the Swiss society for study and protection of birds), *Die Vogelwarte* (German journal of bird ringing), and *Bird Study* (published by the British Trust for Ornithology). In addition large sets of both *Audubon Magazine* and *Forest and Bird* have been received by donation and further issues of these journals have been promised to the Library.

Four further requests for exchange have been received from overseas journals and will be considered this year.

E. G. TURBOTT,

HON. LIBRARIAN

### TREASURER'S REPORT — 1955

The membership of the Society remains as last year at 772, the number of new members exactly balancing that of the resignations for the year. There are 59 Life Members, 475 Ordinary Members paying 7s. 6d. per annum, 51 Junior Members paying 5s. per annum, 169 Endowment Members paying 10s. a year, and 19 Complimentary Members to whom copies of *Notornis* are sent free. Sixty-nine members were unfinancial on 31 March, representing the sum of £36 7s. 6d. Some of these subscriptions are owing for two years. In spite of repeated reminders some members are still very slow in paying their accounts on time. This does mean considerably extra trouble for the treasurer, extra stationery (forms and envelopes), and unnecessary extra postage costs.

Although the Society appears to be holding its own, the financial position is not as good as it might be, especially as the cost of printing *Notornis* is rising all the time and next year is expected to be very much higher. The total cost this year was £257 10s., compared with £188 10s. last year. Another marked increase was in postages — this year £42 12s. 1d., compared with £22 14s. 1d. in 1953-4.

There was a slight increase in the amount of subscriptions received during the year, £278 0s. 6d. being received this year compared with £263 3s. 6d. last year. Sales of various Society publications realised £18 18s.

The Society's most grateful thanks are due to all who have sent donations during the year; and to Mr D. N. Chambers for auditing the books.

NOELLE MACDONALD,

Hon. Treasurer,

12/5/55

### REPORT OF THE RINGING COMMITTEE

For the Year ended 31 March

By P. C. BULL

Once again the number of birds ringed during the year (3496) exceeds all previous records. The number of recoveries (126) appears lower than usual, but this is only because details of many recoveries were received too late for inclusion in this report and have been held over for next year's one. It would help the recorder if operators would send in details of recoveries as soon as they are made. The usual summary of the species ringed and recovered during the year is supplied separately for the year ending 31 March 1955.

The highlight of this year's operations has been the recovery in Australia

(continued on p. 138)

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (INCORPORATED)

Balance Sheet for Year ending 31/3/55

| LIABILITIES                                |     |           | ASSETS   |     |           |
|--|-----|-----------|--|-----|-----------|
| <b>SUBSCRIPTIONS:</b>                      |     |           | <b>SUBSCRIPTIONS:</b>                              |     |           |
| Paid in Advance to 1/4/54 .....            | 50  | 7 6       | Arrears £36 7s. 6d., estimated to realise .....    | 17  | 0 0       |
| Plus paid in 1954-55 .....                 | 43  | 6 0       | <b>STOCKS ON HAND:</b>                             |     |           |
|  | 93  | 13 6      | Ringing (Rings and Stationery) .....               | 37  | 0 0       |
| Less transferred to Subscription A/c ..... | 35  | 17 6      | Stationery .....                                   | 8   | 0 0       |
|  |     | 57 16 0   | Envelopes .....                                    | 3   | 0 0       |
| Life Members' Subs. to 1/4/54 .....        | 187 | 13 0      | Reports and Bulletins (Cyclostyled Reprints) ..... | 95  | 15 0      |
| Plus paid in 1954-55 .....                 | 21  | 12 0      | 'Checklist' .....                                  | 18  | 12 0      |
|  | 209 | 5 0       |  | 162 | 7 0       |
| Less transferred to Subscription A/c ..... | 19  | 17 6      | <b>SUNDRY DEBTORS:</b>                             |     |           |
|  |     | 189 7 6   | Reprints sold not yet paid .....                   | 0   | 15 6      |
|  |     | 247 3 6   | 'Checklists' .....                                 | 3   | 16 6      |
| <b>SUNDRY CREDITORS</b> .....              |     | 36 0 0    | Takahe .....                                       | 0   | 10 0      |
| <b>GENERAL RESERVE</b> .....               | 336 | 3 6       | <b>PLANT</b> at cost less Depreciation .....       |     | 5 2 0     |
| Add Gain for Year .....                    | 30  | 12 9      | <b>CASH:</b> Bank of New Zealand .....             | 123 | 16 9      |
|  |     | 366 16 3  | Post Office Savings Bank .....                     | 306 | 8 11      |
|  |     |           |  | 430 | 5 8       |
|  |     |           |  |     | £649 19 9 |
|  |     | £649 19 9 |  |     |           |

We report to the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Incorporated that we have examined the books, accounts and vouchers of the Society for the year ended 31st March 1955, and certify that the above Balance Sheet is properly drawn up to show the true financial position of the Society at that date. We have accepted the values placed by your secretary on 'stocks on hand'.

CHAMBERS, WORTH AND CHAMBERS

D. N. Chambers

AUDITORS

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (INCORPORATED)

## Income and Expenditure Account for Year ended 31/3/55

| INCOME  |          |           | EXPENDITURE  |          |           |
|---|----------|-----------|--|----------|-----------|
| Subscriptions:                                  |          |           | Printing <i>Notornis</i> .....   | 216 0 3  |           |
| Cash 1954-5 .....                               | 276 18 0 |           | Illustrations .....  | 41 10 0  |           |
| Overdue £36 7s. 6d., estimated to produce ..... | 17 0 0   |           |  |          | 257 10 3  |
|   |          | 293 18 0  | General Expenses:  |          |           |
| Donations:                                      |          |           | Envelopes .....  | 12 9 9   |           |
| General .....                                   | 12 11 10 |           | Stationery .....   | 18 19 10 |           |
| Illustrations .....                             | 3 10 0   |           | Postages .....   | 42 12 11 |           |
|   |          | 16 1 10   | Exchange .....   | 0 3 6    |           |
| Sales:  |          |           | Sundries .....   | 6 11 0   |           |
| Back Numbers .....                              | 16 19 4  |           |  |          | 80 17 0   |
| <i>Takahe</i> Issue .....                       | 1 4 0    |           | Depreciation Plant .....   |          | 3 6 10    |
| Reprints .....                                  | 0 15 6   |           | Excess of Income over Expenditure transferred to General Reserve ..... |          | 30 12 9   |
| Cyclostyled Reprints .....                      | 1 15 0   |           |  |          |           |
| 'Checklist' .....                               | 7 3 6    |           |  |          |           |
|   |          | 27 17 4   |  |          |           |
| Ringing Scheme .....                            |          | 24 17 6   |  |          |           |
| Interest Post Office Savings Bank .....         |          | 9 12 2    |  |          |           |
|   |          |           |  |          |           |
|   |          | £372 6 10 |  |          | £372 6 10 |

last winter of six white-fronted terns ringed at Lake Ellesmere the previous summer. The suspected movement of young terns to Australia was one of the reasons for starting the ringing scheme, and it is very gratifying that this movement is now an established fact. It is to be hoped that a similar movement in banded dotterel will be established in due course, but at present relatively few birds of this species have been ringed. Dispersal movements of young gannets continue to be documented with a large number of recoveries, most of them from Australia. There have also been some long-distance recoveries of harrier hawks, and useful data have been collected on the dispersal of gulls in the Auckland and in the Nelson-Wellington-East Coast areas. It is encouraging to see the publication of papers reporting the progress of studies involving birds ringed under the Society's scheme. So far there have been papers on blackbirds, harriers, gannets and gulls, and it is hoped that further work will be published before long. With this trend developing, there is less need for detailed annual lists of recoveries and, except for recoveries of special interest, it is proposed to reduce this list to a brief summary of general trends.

A less satisfactory aspect of the ringing work is that some operators are not sufficiently critical of the recoveries they report. In two instances, both involving more than one bird, ring numbers which were read in the field with binoculars have proved to be incorrect. If this sort of thing continues it may be necessary to reject from the permanent record all recoveries which are not supported by the presence of the actual ring. At present the recovery cards are marked to show clearly the circumstances under which the particular recovery was made. On another occasion an adult red-billed gull was reported at Porangahau with a yellow ring, thus indicating that the bird had been ringed in Canterbury, but there are no records of this species ever having been ringed there. Both the ringing operator (assuming it is a Canterbury gull) and the person who made the 'recovery' are experienced operators, but it would appear that one or the other has confused the red-billed with the black-billed species or else that some unauthorised person has been ringing gulls.

The excessive wear noted on some rings after only a few years' use was reported last year. In an attempt to correct this, some type B rings were obtained from America and used last season, but it is still too early to judge their worth. The Dominion Laboratory has analysed the Society's standard rings and concluded that the copper content is undesirably high. Inquiries have been made with regard to the experiences of Australian, British and American workers, but as yet there is no complete solution to the problem.

The problem of paying for the ever-increasing numbers of bird rings required by the Society is becoming urgent. While the Department of Internal Affairs has helped in the past, requests for further assistance would be more convincing if it could be shown that the members of the Society had made a substantial contribution themselves. If, as appears to be the case, the Society cannot spare any contribution from its general funds, it may be necessary to establish a ringing fund and ask members for donations to it.

With the approval of the Department of Internal Affairs, a small quantity of size 8 rings was sold to the North Canterbury Acclimatization Society for use on black swans, because that Society's long-continued ringing work with swans was threatened by a temporary shortage of rings.

In conclusion, the Ringing Committee wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr J. Moreland (Dominion Museum) for his work as Ringing Recorder; to Mr J. M. Cunningham for work carried out in Europe on behalf of the Committee; to the Dominion Museum for housing the Society's records and for clerical assistance; to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research for typing duplicate recovery cards and for the chemical analysis of rings; to the Department of Internal Affairs for their co-operation with permits and for allowing the Society to comment on the draft provisions of the new Wild Life Act; and finally to the many members of the public, both here and in Australia, who have sent in rings from dead birds.

# RINGING OPERATIONS

## SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 1955

*Compiled by P. C. BULL, Lower Hutt*

The following is a statistical summary of the birds ringed and recoveries during the past year. It includes a number of birds of various species outside the normal scope of the Society's scheme, ringed by special permission of the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, and also some birds ringed with other than the Society's rings, but details of which have been provided by the operators. No distinction is made in either case. The list includes only those species which have been ringed or recovered during the present year; species which have been ringed in other years may be found by consulting *Notornis*, Vol. 5, No. 5, and Vol. 6, No. 1.

### BIRDS RINGED AND RECOVERED

(Asterisk denotes coloured rings also used)

| <i>Species, Operator and Where Ringed</i>                   | Totals for<br>1954-5<br><i>Ringed Recov'd</i> | Grand Totals<br>to 31/3/55<br><i>Ringed Recov'd</i> |
|---|---|---|
| WANDERING ALBATROSS   |   | 31    1   |
| R. A. Falla, Wellington                                     | 1   |   |
| SHY MOLLYHAWK   |   | 1   |
| R. A. Falla, Wellington                                     | 1   |   |
| FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER                                     |   | 28  |
| R. B. Sibson, Hen Is.                                       | 1   |   |
| SOOTY SHEARWATER  |   | 44  |
| R. B. Sibson, Hen Is.                                       | 2   |   |
| GREY-FACED PETREL   |   | 26  |
| R. B. Sibson, Hen Is.                                       | 8   |   |
| PYCROFT'S PETREL  |   | 8   |
| R. B. Sibson, Hen Is.                                       | 4   |   |
| GANNET  |   | 48    2562    83                                    |
| P. A. S. Stein, Horuhoru and Bush Is.                       | 757   |   |
| K. Wodzicki, Cape Kidnappers                                | 120   |   |
| BLACK SWAN  |   | 161   |
| North Canterbury Acclimatization Society,<br>Lake Ellesmere | 161   |   |
| HARRIER   |   | 14    229    68                                     |
| J. S. Watson, Hawke's Bay                                   | 13  |   |
| BANDED DOTTEREL   |   | 49  |
| *J. M. Cunningham, Whakataki                                | 1   |   |
| *H. R. McKenzie, Firth of Thames                            | 5   |   |
| NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL  |   | 10    5   |
| *H. R. McKenzie, Firth of Thames                            | 2   |   |
| PIED STILT  |   | 33    2   |
| J. M. Cunningham, Ohau R.                                   | 1   |   |
| R. B. Sibson, Ohau R.                                       | 1   |   |
| BLACK-BACKED GULL   |   | 32    2806    108                                   |
| J. M. Cunningham, Palliser Spit                             | 48  |   |
| J. C. Davenport, Rangitoto Is.                              | 636   |   |
| F. C. Kinsky, Baring Head & Somes Is.                       | 99  |   |
| P. A. S. Stein, Fan Is., near Waiheke                       | 2   |   |
| RED-BILLED GULL   |   | 6    706    89                                      |
| J. M. Cunningham, Castlepoint                               | 19  |   |
| BLACK-BILLED GULL   |   | 3    2213    32                                     |
| *E. W. Dawson, Ashley & Waitaki Rivers                      | 451   |   |
| D. H. Braithwaite, Ngaruroro R.                             | 20  |   |

| <i>Species, Operator and Where Ringed</i> | Totals for<br>1954 - 5<br>Ringed Recov'd | Grand Totals<br>to 31/3/55<br>Ringed Recov'd |
|---|--|--|
| WHITE-FRONTED TERN                        |  |  |
| *W. C. Clark, Waitaki R.                  | 301                                      | 8 1843 57                                    |
| CASPIAN TERN                              |  | 245  |
| M. A. Waller, South Kaipara Head          | 236                                      |  |
| SHINING CUCKOO                            |  | 1  |
| *R. B. Sibson, Auckland                   | 1  |  |
| BLACKBIRD                                 |  | 527 72                                       |
| *P. C. Bull, Lower Hutt                   | 88                                       |  |
| H. L. Secker, Karori                      | 14                                       |  |
| H. G. Warburton, Mairangi Bay             | 8  |  |
| SONG THRUSH                               |  | 130 16                                       |
| *P. C. Bull, Lower Hutt                   | 27                                       |  |
| H. G. Warburton, Mairangi Bay             | 3  |  |
| HEDGESPARROW                              |  | 39 3   |
| P. C. Bull, Lower Hutt                    | 7  |  |
| SILVER-EYE                                |  | 5422 189                                     |
| B. D. Bell, Blenheim                      | 18                                       |  |
| D. Medway, New Plymouth                   | 34                                       |  |
| J. S. Watson, Eastbourne                  | 384                                      |  |
| STARLING                                  |  | 102 1  |
| H. L. Secker, Karori                      | 22                                       |  |
| OTHER SPECIES (previous years)            |  | 1427 241                                     |
| Numbers Ringed and Recovered 1954 - 5     | 3496 126                                 |  |
| Numbers Ringed and Recovered to 31/3/54   |  | 15,147 841                                   |
| Numbers Ringed and Recovered to 31/3/55   |  | 18,643 967                                   |

## RECOVERIES

### GANNET (*Sula bassana serrator*)

Thirty-three gannets ringed as chicks at either Horuhoru or Cape Kidnappers were recovered in Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria) during the year, and two others were found dead on New Zealand beaches. Most of these birds were in their first year, but five of those recovered in Australia were in their second year and one nearly in its third. Thirteen gannets ringed as chicks at Cape Kidnappers have been identified at the colony as three- or four-year-old birds. One of these, No. 15322, a four-year-old bird, was breeding, but the others appeared to be unemployed.

### HARRIER (*Circus approximans*)

Nine birds were recovered in various parts of Hawke's Bay (Kereru, Tikokino, Otane, Waipukurau, Weber and Norsewood) and five from further afield, namely Tolaga Bay, Waitoa (near Te Aroha) and Whangarei to the north, and Masterton and Annat (Canterbury) to the south. Several of these birds had been ringed for two years prior to recovery, the others for shorter periods.

### BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus dominicanus*)

Twenty-one of the recoveries were birds ringed at Rangitoto Island; sixteen of them were found in the vicinity of Auckland, two at Motutapu Island, one at Te Kauwhata and one near Cape Rodney. Twelve of these birds were recovered during their first year, six during their second, two during their third, and one during its fourth. Eight gulls ringed at Baring Head have been recovered during the year, four of them at the place of ringing,



three in Wellington and one at Masterton, all birds being in their first or second year when recovered. Two gulls ringed at Paliiser Spit were recovered in Wellington, one being in its first year and the other in its fourth.

#### RED-BILLED GULL (*Larus novaehollandiae*)

Two birds ringed at the Boulder Bank, Nelson, were recovered near Nelson when in their second year. A gull ringed as a chick at the Brothers Lighthouse was recovered in Wellington during its third year. Another Wellington recovery was a bird ringed at White Rock (East Coast) 18 months previously. Two red-billed gulls have been recovered in New Plymouth, one was found dead and the ring number of the other was read with binoculars. Both were originally ringed as chicks at Snapper Rock and when recovered were two and three years old respectively.

#### BLACK-BILLED GULL (*Larus bulleri*)

Three black-billed gulls ringed as chicks at the Ashley River have been recovered within a year of ringing, two of them in Christchurch and the third near Rangiora.

#### WHITE-FRONTED TERN (*Sterna striata*)

Six birds ringed as chicks at Lake Ellesmere in January 1954 were recovered in New South Wales during the following winter (May to August). This is the first occasion that New Zealand white-fronted terns have been proved to visit Australia, although the existence of such a movement has for long been suspected. Two birds were recovered in New Zealand not far from where they were ringed.

#### BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*)

Ten ringed blackbirds were recovered at or within a mile of ringing stations in Lower Hutt, Karori and Masterton, all within two years of ringing.

#### SONG THRUSH (*Turdus ericetorum*)

Two birds were recovered within a half of where ringed in Lower Hutt, one eighteen months and the two two and a half years after ringing.

#### WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops lateralis*)

Two birds ringed at Mahina Bay were brought in by cats at Day's Bay within a few days of ringing.

#### STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

A starling ringed as an adult at Karori was retrapped at the same ringing station five months later.

#### CORRECTION TO 1953-54 RINGING REPORT

*Notornis*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 16. Black-backed gull No. 13823 was recovered at Orapiu, at the south-east end of Waiheke Island, not at Henderson as stated.

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF NEST RECORDS SCHEME

The convener, Mr Hallam Secker, Wellington, who succeeds Mr J. King, Feilding, reports the accession of some 100 cards for the nesting season of 1954-55. There are now almost 600 accession cards classified as follows:

Bellbird (2), Bittern (1), Blackbird (140), Yellow Bunting (3), Chaffinch (22), Banded Dottrel (22), New Zealand Dottrel (4), Rock Dove (17), Brown Duck (2), Grey Duck (6), Mallard Duck (2), Fantail (16), Gannet (2), Goldfinch (17), Little Grebe (1), Greenfinch (5), Black-backed Gull (10), Silver Gull (1), Harrier (10), White-faced Heron (1), Reef Heron (2), Sacred Kingfisher (3), Skylark (6), Magpie (1), Morepork (1), Black

Oystercatcher (5), Pied Oystercatcher (2), Little Blue Penguin (1), Grey-faced Petrel (1), Bush Pigeon (1), Pipit (2), Pukeko (5), Lesser Redpoll (10), Northern Robin (4), House Sparrow (11), Hedge Sparrow (28), Starling (9), Stilt (13), Black Swan (1), Grey Teal (7), Black-fronted Tern (1), Caspian Tern (2), Fairy Tern (1), White-fronted Tern (9), Song Thrush (143), Pied Tit (3), Yellow-breasted Tit (1), Tui (1), Grey Warbler (13), White Eye (23), Whitehead (4).

## ANNUAL MEETING

About fifty-five members of the Society attended the fifteenth Annual General Meeting, held this year at Dunedin in the Pioneer Women's Memorial Association Rooms in Moray Place, on 13 May. The members present came from many parts of the country – from Southland to North Auckland. The president, Mr H. R. McKenzie, presided.

The general report was read by the secretary, Mr F. M. Brookfield, and the treasurer's report and statement were presented in her absence by the president, Mr McKenzie. Reports were also presented by Dr R. A. Falla on behalf of the convener of the Ringing Committee, and by the secretary on behalf of the librarian, Mr E. G. Turbott.

All the foregoing were adopted by the meeting. Mr Turbott's most interesting report on the eleventh International Congress was read and received by the meeting.

Following the adoption of the Ringing report it was resolved to set up a special fund to provide for the purchase of rings. The growth of the ringing activities of the Society had made this most necessary.

The following were, in the absence of other nominations, declared elected to replace retiring officers:

North Island vice-president: Mr P. C. Bull (re-elected)

Editor: Mr R. B. Sibson

Council member: Mrs Olga Sansom

The brief but very valuable address of the president, Mr H. R. McKenzie, will appear in the next issue.

Mr D. N. Chambers was thanked for his services and re-elected the Society's auditor.

After the formal business was completed at about 8.45 p.m. the meeting adjourned to view most informative colour films of Stewart Island bird life, shown by Dr R. A. Falla and Captain Black.

## BRIEF REPORT ON THE DUNEDIN EXCURSIONS

For the Annual General Meeting and ensuing week-end, members of the Society converged on Dunedin from many parts of New Zealand, and on two well-planned excursions were given ample opportunity to learn something of the varied bird life of this richly rewarding area.

On 14/5/55 the visitors were taken first to the mole and then to the tidal flats on the western side of the entrance to Otago Harbour. To some the variety of shags was quite bewildering, for two dimorphic species were present: *P. melanoleucos* represented by the white-throated and little pied forms and also by yearlings without white throats; and *P. carunculatus* represented by the bronze and white-breasted forms which are sometimes called Stewart Island Shags. Then outside the harbour were the long lines of Spotted Shags, streaming in their hundreds to and from and past Taiaaroa Head.

On the mole itself a flock of more than three hundred White-fronted Terns contained only two mottled birds of the season. Three Black-fronted Terns in a puzzling transitional plumage were the subject of some discussion. Off the end of the mole mollymawks were usually in view, but only Buller's was certainly identified. From time to time the eyes of the visitors would wander to the two young Royal Albatrosses, visible on the headland opposite. Once two adults were present together, but it was easy to miss their coming and

going, though they were often conspicuous over the choppy waters outside the bay.

A most profitable walk was taken over the sandy flats. Four species of waders were present in some numbers. Whatever may have happened or have been reported in the past, the observations of recent years show that many Godwits, Stilts and Banded Dotterels now pass the winter in the south of New Zealand. Pied Oystercatchers were strung out along the tideline. But to some visitors the most satisfying experience on the flats was to be found in watching resting flocks of Black-fronted Terns, which numbered more than a hundred and of which most appeared to be in full breeding plumage. Even a Reef Heron was seen, lone representative of a species now much outnumbered in Otago by the White-faced Heron. The Caspian Tern, so plentiful in the north, is here hailed as a rarity.

On the following day the first objective was Taiaroa Head, where the large white downy youngster of one of the three pairs of Royal Albatrosses which are breeding this year could be viewed through the tall Stalag-like barbed wire fence. It was here that some of our members temporarily forsook ornithology to scramble down the cliffs and examine at close quarters a colony of fur seals. Two gannets flew past.

Thence the itinerary took us across the peninsula to the outer inlets with their Stilts, Oystercatchers and a White-faced Heron; and so to Sandfly Bay. Here at least for the visitors from the north was the *pièce de résistance* of the trip, a trio of Yellow-eyed Penguins, two in bright freshly moulted plumage on their breeding slope and one swimming in the gentle surf. Offshore on a reef were Black Oystercatchers and beyond on the towering Gull Rocks most of the available space was occupied by the so-called Stewart Island Shags. The Society is grateful to Mr Sharp, the official ranger, for the part which he played in making this a most successful day.

Individual visitors were taken by their hosts to other points of ornithological interest: Tomahawk Lagoon with its impressive flock of Shovelers; Waikouaiti with its many White-faced Herons and waders; the Town Belt with its Robins, Bellbirds and Creepers. To Mrs Walker and her helpers who provided such unstinting hospitality, the visitors are deeply grateful.

R.B.S.

## OBITUARY

REV. F. H. ROBERTSON

Frederic Herbert Robertson was born in Feilding in 1910. He was educated in Auckland, where he was dux of the Mount Albert Grammar School, and later took his Master of Arts degree with honours. He then joined the Presbyterian Theological College in Dunedin, where he was a notable scholar. At the end of his studies he entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church at Ross on the West Coast. From there he was appointed Director for New Zealand of the Christian Order Campaign undertaken by all the Protestant Churches of New Zealand. On the termination of this task he responded to a call from St Columba's Church, Havelock North, where he remained until his appointment as first Rector of Lindisfarne College in Hastings, a position he held until his untimely death on 15 December 1954.

Fred Robertson was a man of many parts, serving the community untiringly. Though this is not the place to enumerate his achievements as a member of his Church and in social work, his initiative and work in the establishment of social services and homes for old people in Hawke's Bay and in Poverty Bay must be mentioned, and above all the founding and organization of Lindisfarne College. It was through his vision, powers of organization, and patient labours that these institutions were set up. They will remain a living monument to him.

It was in 1946 that Fred Robertson became a member of the New Zealand