



OSNZ news

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 31

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NOTE: Deadline for the September issue
will be 21st August.

Unpaid Subscriptions

Members who have not paid their sub-
scriptions for 1984 are requested to do
so without delay. Unpaid subscriptions
result in additional work and expense.

DOUG BOOTH, Hon. Treasurer

Welcome Swallow roosts

(1) Investigating a Welcome Swallow
roost was an exciting find for a group
of Hawkes Bay members.

The roost was on a small island in
the middle of the Esk River, separated
from the bank by a 3 m wide deep
channel. 4 or 5 bushy willows, each
about 6 m tall grew on the island, and
this was the roost for 500-500 swallows.
At 2000 hours only a few birds were
seen flying upstream but by 2030 hours,
when the sun was setting, large numbers
were flying quite high up. These birds
suddenly swooped down and all circled
the island before landing momentarily
but with more and more settling on the
branches. The noise of their twittering
increased until the light lessened, when
it tapered off, ending almost abruptly
just after 2100 hours.

A. L. HODGSON, M. A. RAMSHAW
& A. C. SAXBY

(2) A check was made of another roost
at Lake Oingo, Fernhill, on 27/1/84
where swallows were thought to be
roosting in some karaka trees. At 2030
hours about 1000 swallows were seen
hawking over the lake and surrounding
hills. However, at 2100 hours the
swallows went to roost suddenly, all
birds settling at once in raupo along the
lake margin, not in the karakas.

J. S. & R. N. HAMILTON

Blue Duck versus Paradise Shelducks

While on a winter tramping trip in
the Cameron River area I saw a Blue
Duck and 2 Paradise Shelducks flying

high overhead, down the valley. About
20 minutes later they flew up the valley
very low, passing us then circling round
several times. My first reaction was
that the Paradise Shelducks were chasing
the Blue Duck but then it became
obvious that in fact the opposite was
occurring. The Blue Duck (sex un-
known as no call was heard) was being
sexually aggressive towards the female
Paradise Shelduck, with the male
Paradise Shelduck trying to fly between
them. These antics continued for at
least an hour and over several kms of
the valley, before the Blue Duck was
finally seen preening.

PETER HOWDEN

Request for assistance

The Spanish Committee on nomen-
clature and systematics of birds is pre-
paring a checklist of the birds of the
world in Spanish. The first step is
compiling all the relevant information
about new systematics findings, taxon-
omic agreements, lists of national and
regional avifaunas and Spanish common
names in Iberoaerica. Any information
and advice which you can give us in
this respect would be greatly appreci-
ated. More data about our project are
available at request from: I. F. Aguillo
& M. Fernandez-Cruz, Chairmen, Com-
ision de nomenclature y sistematica de
la Sociedad Espaola de Ornitologia,
Catedra de Vertebrados, Planta IX,
Ciuda Universitaria, Madrid-3, Spain.
Dr M. FERNANDEZ-CRUZ & I. F.
AGUILLO

Far North survey

The Far North Anniversary weekend
survey was held again this year, from
28-30 January, when just over 30
migratory participants from Auckland,
Whangarei and throughout the north
gathered at Larmer's Road Bush Camp
in the Herekino Forest, near Kaitaia.
After the Saturday morning briefing
session many groups moved farther
north to camp near their respective
areas.

This year 24 dune lakes were sur-
veyed. It was noted that Dabchicks
(38 counted) are now on 10 lakes and
Australian Little Grebes (13 counted)
on 3 lakes. However, no Hoary-headed
Grebes were seen this year.

Some 98.6 km of beaches were
patrolled for wrecked sea birds. These
included Ninety Mile Beach (85 km,
105 birds), Karikari Beach (3.8 km, 7
birds), Pukeke Beach (3.3 km, 0 birds),
and Henderson Bay (6.5 km, 28 birds).

Aupouri State Forest was surveyed
for the first time. This exotic pine
forest now stretches from Ahipara up
to near Cape Maria van Dieman and
includes many habitats, ranging from
stabilised sand dunes, newly planted
pines, and various ages of pines up to
20 year-old trees. 40 forest compart-
ments were surveyed and the birdlife
recorded. It is proposed to repeat these
surveys at 5-year intervals.

Participants enjoyed the annual bird-
ing activity in the north and although
the weather did not exhibit the usual
perfection, conditions were good for our
activities.

MIKE KEARNS

Farewell Spit, January 1984

For 6 days in mid-January 1984 the
outer part of Farewell Spit came under
the scrutiny of 8 OSNZ members.
Those who participated were: Jenny
Hawkins, David Baker, Beth Brown,
Bill Cash, Peter & Margaret Child, Tim
Lovegrove and George Wilkinson.

By prior arrangement we were able
to use one of the vacant homesteads at
the Lighthouse Station — now un-
occupied because the light is being auto-
mated. We are hoping that the Ministry
of Transport might agree to keep this
house after the light has been automated,
so that it can be used by visiting
scientific parties. It was certainly a
comfortable and convenient base for
working the area between Mullet Creek
and the Shell Banks.

Big tides during several hot, sunny

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee

Over the past 12 months the Rare Birds Committee has encouraged the submission of observations of rare birds seen in 1983/84. Records from previous years, that had not been submitted previously, were also welcomed. The collection and central filing of such data will be valuable for future analysis of the occurrence of vagrant species in New Zealand.

Most records received were accompanied by good descriptions and the Committee was able to accept many records with confidence. Few reports were received for species of Local Rarity, which are reviewed by the appropriate Regional Recorder and later filed by the RBC. These records are as important as those for species of National Rarity level. Please check with your RR to see if you have past records which should be documented.

Accepted records for 1983/84 are listed below and include 2 species new to New Zealand — Black Falcon and Wilson's Phalarope.

King Penguin — Single birds at the Snares in Jan/Feb 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*) and Stewart Island in Feb 1983 (R. Thomas).

Chatham Island Mollymawk — 1 bird at the Snares Western Chain in Jan 1983 was out of its normal range (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

*Masked Booby** — 1 was found near Hamilton in July 1983 and later died (C. R. Veitch *et al.*).

Lesser Frigatebird — Records from Cape Campbell in Oct 1983 (A. & G. Schroder) and Farewell Spit in Nov 1983 (T. Watson) could refer to the same bird.

White-necked Heron — 1 at Waipu Estuary in Jan 1984 (A. H. Gordon).

Wood Duck — 1 at the Snares in December 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

Black Falcon — The first record for NZ was seen at Gisborne in Nov 1983 (A. Blackburn).

Ringed Plover — An immature bird at Miranda from Nov 1983 onwards (S. Davies, B. Chudleigh *et al.*).

Oriental Dotterel — 1 at Lake KIWainono in Jan 1983 (R. Pierce, C. Coop).

Lesser Yellowlegs — 1 at Westshore Ponds, Hawkes Bay, in Feb 1983 (K. V. Todd, N. MacKenzie).

*Common Sandpiper** — 1 near Opotiki in Dec 1983 (P. C. M. Latham *et al.*).

*Hudsonian Godwit** — 1 at Lake Elles-

mere in March 1984 (A. McBride, J. Fennell).

Wilson's Phalarope — Singles at Foxton in September 1983 (J. & M. Moore *et al.*) and Lake Ellesmere from Nov 1983 to April 1984 (P. M. Sagar *et al.*) were the first records for NZ.

*Barn Owl** — 1 was found near Papatotoe in March 1983 (B. J. Gill).

Spine-tailed Swift — 2 were seen at the Snares in Jan/Feb 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

Fork-tailed Swift — 1 at Te Anau in May 1983 (J. V. Morrison, H. Shaw) and 2 at Napier in July 1983 (W. & M. Twydle).

*Kookaburra** — 1 near Rangiora in June 1983 (C. M. Clarke).

Fairy Martin — 2 birds at Outram, Otago, in company with 2 *Tree Martins* during Feb/March 1983 (A. Nevill).

Species marked * are on the Local List and were verified by the Regional Recorder. The remaining records were accepted by the RBC.

JOHN FENNEL, *Secretary*

Annual report of the Atlas Committee 1983/84

As members will be aware, our hopes to have the new atlas published 'by Christmas 1983' (OSNZ news 27) were not realised; it now seems that Christmas 1984 is a more likely time. The main problem has been that Mr C. J. R. Robertson, who alone has mastered the intricacies of producing the special computer maps and microfiches for the atlas, was unexpectedly required by his Department to devote all his time to another urgent task for which no one with the necessary expertise was available. The new task involved collecting and presenting field information required urgently to stave off serious threats to the Black Stilt's main breeding habitat; members of OSNZ, while regretting the delay to the atlas, will no doubt agree that the Black Stilt was a top priority. Dr M. C. Crawley (Director of Research, Wildlife Service) has promised that once the current Waitaki Survey is finished (hopefully, early June), he will do his best to ensure that Mr Robertson has adequate time promptly to complete his part in the publication of the atlas. Given this assurance we can reasonably expect the atlas to be available to members sometime during the final quarter of the year.

It would be wrong, however, to imply that no progress has been made with the atlas over the past year. The proof maps have all been checked and errors

corrected, the maps have been furnished with notes and references to supplementary information on breeding range and population size, and a new introduction has been written. Also, the committee has recently been successful with several of its applications for money to help meet the costs of publishing the new atlas. Grants, totalling \$12,250, have been received from the NZ Lottery Board, the NZ Forestry Service, the Environment Council, Mobil Oil NZ Limited, and the J. R. McKenzie Trust Board. This positive response to our applications for funds suggests that the Society's work, as exemplified by the Provisional Atlas, is highly valued by organisations interested in conservation, and that there is a real need for the new atlas.

P. C. BULL, *Convener*

Moult Scheme — Annual Report 1984

Over the last year 759 moult records were received covering 57 species, of which 51 species were new to the scheme. Overall 569 records referred to birds not in active moult, the remainder (190) for birds in moult.

Therefore to date there are 1279 records for 73 species deposited with the scheme and contributed by 7 observers. 578 are of active moult, 701 of non-moulting birds.

The largest contribution over the last year came from David Melville, who contributed records from museums and field observations (Chatham Islands). In particular 515 records of primary moult in waders were received from him, covering 26 species and comprising 117 of moulting and 398 of non-moulting birds. Overall David sent in 669 records for 46 species, most of which were new species for the scheme.

Other contributors were Paul Sagar, who sent in 63 records from the Snares (mostly non-moulting birds though moulting information on Black Tomtits was included); Michael Taylor sent 24 records and Brian Gill 3 records from the Auckland region.

The records received during 1983/84 are summarised below; for each species the first number refers to records of birds in active moult, while the number in brackets refers to birds not in moult:

Black-browed Mollymawk 0(38), Shy Mollymawk 5(24), Grey-faced Petrel 0(1), White-headed Petrel 1(0), Flesh-footed Shearwater 0(1), Grey Duck 1(0), Australasian Harrier 31(9), NZ Falcon 7(9), Spur-winged Plover 1(14), Eastern Golden Plover 20(47), NZ Dotterel 3(13), Banded Dotterel 22(43),