

TABLE 1 - Details of New Zealand Channel-billed Cuckoo specimens (all measurements are in mm).

Reg. no.	Date	¹ Dead for	Age	² Sex	Culmen length (feathers to bill tip)	Bill length (anterior margin of nostril to bill tip)	Wing length	Tail length	Tarsus length	Mid toe and claw length
³ A2469	2 Dec 24	?	Ad	M	80.0	-	368	270	45.5	56.4
25346	14 Oct 96	5 days	Ad	F	74.2	60.5	341	267	45.5	57.7
25345	30 Oct 96	3 weeks	Ad	M	84.1	64.7	356	261	45.4	-
25344	9 Nov 96	4 weeks	Ad	M	-	-	c350	-	-	-

¹Estimated time since death.

²Based on measurements (see Mason & Forrester 1996) and an ovary present in bird 1.

³Otago Museum specimen examined in 1998 (pers. obs.).

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Chestnut-breasted Shelducks and other wetland birds at Tupurangi, Chatham Islands

On 4 December 1997, I saw three Chestnut-breasted Shelducks (*Tadorna tadornoides*) on a lake and adjacent farmland at Tupurangi (44°15'S 176°12'W), Pitt Island, in the Chatham Islands group. These were identified from their plumage (Marchant & Higgins 1990), as one adult male and two adult females. This is the first record of this species from the Chatham Islands and the most eastern occurrence of this species.

This Australian species was first confirmed in New Zealand in 1973 (Grant 1989), although there is an earlier unconfirmed record (Fennell *et al.* 1983). The next records are of at least 56 individuals throughout New Zealand between December 1982 and May

1983 (Heather 1987). Since then only a few birds have been seen in New Zealand, apart from a flock of 22 birds on Campbell Island in the summer of 1984/85 (Heather 1987, Heather & Robertson 1996). Two instances of breeding have been recorded in New Zealand (Heather & Robertson 1996). Vagrants have reached several remote islands before: Norfolk (Hermes *et al.* 1986), Kermadec (Heather & Robertson 1996, Clifford & Lawrie 1997), Snares, Auckland, and Campbell Islands (Heather 1987).

Chestnut-breasted Shelducks migrate between breeding and moulting places and movements may be more extensive in dry years, such as 1982/83 when many reached New Zealand (Marchant & Higgins 1990). The Chatham Island sighting also coincided with a drought in Australia.

No *Tadorna* shelducks are resident on the Chatham Islands, although one (possibly an undescribed species) used to occur there (Williams 1971, Tennyson & Millener 1994). The endemic New Zealand Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) occurs as a vagrant at the Chatham Islands (Williams 1971, Fennell & Merton 1984).

The lake at Tupuangi is the largest and most important site for a variety of wetland birds on Pitt Island, so it is the most likely site to attract vagrant waterfowl. Apart from some brief notes by Bell (1955) and Lindsay *et al.* (1959), there are no published records of the birds which inhabit this wetland. Lindsay *et al.* (1959) recorded "a small colony" of Pukeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) in the lower part of the Tupuangi Creek valley. I did not see Pukeko here but recorded five elsewhere on Pitt Island during my seven day visit.

Species seen with the shelducks at Tupuangi on 4 December 1997 were:

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*): 162. Bell (1955) reported that Black Swans sometimes appear on "the small lake near Trig F" (= Tupuangi).

Domestic Goose (*Anser anser*): about 75.

Duck spp.: 26 (mainly Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, five possible Grey Ducks *Anas superciliosa*). Bell (1955) reported that he saw 40 Grey Ducks on "the small lake" (presumably Tupuangi) in January 1953. Lindsay *et al.* (1959) recorded about 20 Grey Ducks at Tupuangi in 1957. Mallards are apparently recent colonists on Pitt Island, with occasional sightings in April 1993 being the only published records (Freeman 1994). During my stay on Pitt Island, I saw a further 18 Mallards, with about 10 ducklings, but only saw 13 Grey Ducks.

Chatham Island Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus chathamensis*): three, including a nesting pair with three eggs by the lake's outlet to the sea. Lindsay *et al.* (1959) recorded this species here in 1957. One of the nesting birds had been banded as an adult on nearby Southeast Island on 8 March 1988.

Banded Dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*): four. I have found no previous records of this species on Pitt Island, but it occurs elsewhere at the Chatham group (Freeman 1994).

Spur-winged Plover (*Vanellus miles*): three. This species was first reported on Pitt Island as recently as 1986 (Freeman 1994), but it is already well-established. I saw another 22 elsewhere on the island.

Brown Skua (*Catharacta skua*): a 'club' of 16 plus two dead birds. Lindsay *et al.* (1959) recorded one Brown Skua here on 1 February 1957.

Southern Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*): five live and one dead. The dead gull and skuas had probably been shot, since farmers are known to shoot skuas on Pitt Island (Hemmings 1990). I found three other dead skuas (two of which had been banded on Southeast Island) and a few other dead gulls on Pitt Island that I presumed had been shot.

Red-billed Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*): five.

White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*): 28, mainly by the lake's outlet to the sea.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo tabitica*): four. These were the only swallows that I saw on Pitt Island. This species was first reported on the island in 1970 and again in 1993 (Freeman 1994).

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