



OSNZ news

No. 24 September, 1982

NOTE: Deadline for the December issue will be 20th November.

Editor's Note

The editor thanks John Fennell for completing most of the copy of the June issue and getting it to the printers during the editor's absence overseas.

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Australasian wader studies

In August, 1980, the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union convened a meeting of people involved in wader studies from all Australian states, New Guinea and New Zealand. Richard Veitch represented New Zealand. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the state of wader counting and banding in Australasia. It was convened in response to both an increased interest in waders in Australasia and a request by the International Waterfowl Research Bureau for a study of waders in the Western Pacific region. Soon after this, the Australasian Wader Studies Group was formed and a full-time Secretary/Co-ordinator appointed. One subject raised at the outset was the necessity of New Zealand involvement if the results of research were to accurately document the waders of the Australasian region.

The aims of the Australasian Wader Studies Group are:

- (1) To obtain a comprehensive picture of the population and distribution in different seasons of resident and migrant waders in the Australasian region.
- (2) To determine the international migration routes used as well as those within the region, and to determine the migrational strategy of the many species which visit the area.
- (3) To monitor short and long term changes in population numbers, age structure and distribution of waders in Australasia.
- (4) To investigate the biology and requirements of waders as a basis for making recommendations on the manage-

ment and conservation of their populations and habitats.

(5) To co-ordinate wader banding activities throughout Australasia, and provide a forum for exchange of information on catching techniques and results.

Members of the A.W.S.G. receive the bi-annual journal "The Stilt" which contains articles from Australia and New Zealand, a round up of wader recoveries, a register of colour marking schemes and lists of recent publications on waders in Australasian journals and newsletters.

Already in Australia, three nation-wide counts have been organised, and the latest count (Feb. 1982) resulted in over 600,000 waders being counted. It is hoped that New Zealand can participate in these counts in future. There are already banding projects being undertaken in New Zealand, and it is hoped that the results of these activities can be better publicised through the A.W.S.G.

Anyone wishing to conduct counts or even become a regional organiser for wader counts in their area, should contact A.W.S.G. Co-ordinator, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, 3039, Victoria, Australia. The membership fee is \$3.00 Australian (payable in Australian currency), sent to the same address.

BRETT LANE & RICHARD VEITCH

More flaxbirds

We were interested to read in the last *OSNZ news* of the observations of birds on flax flowers. In our garden at Te Kuiti the flax had a good flowering season too, and constant visitors to drink the nectar were the Silvereyes, Starlings and Mynas, with Tuks coming at quiet times of the day.

The flowers have produced an abundant seed crop, which we have often seen Chaffinches feeding on, but no other birds seem to take an interest. There is a notable lack of finches in this region, so we would be interested to know what species of birds others have observed feeding on flax flowers.

GILLIAN & ROB GUEST

Starving N.Z. Pigeons

Twice this winter I have received N.Z. Pigeons from the South Road area of Mamaku. On arrival both birds were emaciated, had poor balance, were able to fly only short distances, if at all, and were scouring badly. However, in both birds the plumage was in fine condition, indicating that starvation had not been prolonged.

Bird number 1. was passed to the Wildlife Service by a local farmer, who saw it fluttering on the ground while shifting stock that were grazing under Tawa. It was passed into my care and examined by a veterinary surgeon, who confirmed by opinion that the bird was starving. This bird died later.

Bird number 2. was seen to flutter to the ground and was collected by a bushman in a Tawa block that was being clearfelled. At the time of writing it is feeding and appears to be doing well.

This is the first time in 5 years of handling injured birds that I have received any birds that appeared to be dying of starvation.

BRENT CALDER

Territorial godwits?

On 24/4/81 I visited Karaka Shellbank and while there saw a high flying N.Z. Pigeon pass overhead at about 100 m. The pigeon was being harried by a Bar-tailed Godwit, which followed closely behind occasionally jinking from side to side.

On 2/1/82 in the same area I observed a similar incident, although in this case the bird being harried was a Far Eastern Curlew. Although many other birds were in the air at these times, the chasing was only carried out by one bird on each occasion. Perhaps surprisingly, none of the Harriers in the area was seen to be chased by godwits. Would this behaviour have something to do with territorial interests in same wintering waders?

K. J. FISHER

A major world wintering ground for migratory waders

Australian ornithologists have discovered from ground-and-air surveys several wader wintering sites of major importance.

The Australasian Wader Study Group surveyed the northern coast of Australia during August and September 1981 and located several areas with vast numbers of wading birds.

With the increased interest in offshore oil and gas exploration on Australia's north-west shelf such a discovery is very timely.

Over 2800 kilometers were surveyed from the air, from Kurumba (eastern Gulf of Carpentaria) to Port Hedland (Western Australia).

The south-eastern corner of the Gulf harboured 61 000 birds and the Broome to Port Hedland area had 145 000 birds of 25 species.

Of particular interest were the following species totals — Great Knot (40 000), Red-necked Stint (32 000), Curlew Sandpiper (25 000), Eastern Knot (20 000), Bar-tailed Godwit (18 000), Large Sand Dotterel (5000), Grey-tailed Tattler (1200), Eastern Curlew (1000) and Oriental Plover (1000).

More information about this survey appeared in RAOU Newsletter 50 (December 1981).

JOHN MARTINDALE & CLIVE MINTON

Whitehead and Long-tailed Cuckoos

Is a Whitehead???

- a geriatric
- a professional ceiling painter
- a North Island passerine
- a female Paradise Duck
- a person with a mortgage and five children.

If you did not answer (c) above, then please read Falla *et al.* page 193 before continuing. If you answered correctly — congratulations and commiserations because WE NEED YOUR HELP !!

At the AGM in May it was decided that the OSNZ would encourage a study of Whiteheads, and their parasite the Long-tailed Cuckoo, throughout the North Island during 1982-85.

We do not plan to conduct a definitive distribution survey, for the Atlas work of the 1970's has given a reasonable picture of this (although any records north of the Waikato or from the Ruahines would be welcome). The emphasis will be on habitat use and abundance

of the birds:— where they occur, the number located within a defined period, and any flocking behaviour observed.

It is hoped to elucidate the dependence of the Long-tailed Cuckoo on Whiteheads e.g. are those cuckoos seen in Northland merely on migration, or are they resident during the breeding season and using other species as hosts? Records of either species during the period October-January should help us to resolve this.

The aggregation of Whiteheads, both during the breeding season (polygamy?) and during the winter (relationships with other species?) are particularly worthy of attention, especially in those areas where Whiteheads are not uncommon. Any information on nesting should be entered into the Nest Record Scheme in the usual way, but we would appreciate hearing about any interesting observations.

It is hoped to expand our knowledge of habitat selection by Whiteheads, a species by no means confined to native forest in some areas of its range. Relative abundance in differing habitats should help to indicate the range and nature of the population in different parts of the North Island.

If you feel you can help in any way, cards are available to aid in the recording of relevant information from your Regional Representative and the survey organisers — John Innes, Forest Research Institute, Private Bag, Rotorua, and Rob Guest, N.Z. Forest Service, Te Kuiti.
JOHN INNES & ROB GUEST

Rare Birds Committee

Annual Report for the period June 1981 to April 1982.

Apart from the activities involved with making a fresh start, the Committee has dealt with the following reports of Unusual Birds.

1. A Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Ahuriri, Napier, 2 March 1968. Not Accepted.

We are agreed that this bird could hardly have been anything else, but as the description was incomplete and the identification was by elimination of other possibilities rather than a positive identification from a full description, we felt that this was not enough to establish a first N.Z. record. A fuller description and more details from further visits with supporting accounts from other observers would have helped here.

2. A Crested Tern, near Napier, 23 April 1981. Accepted.

This species has since been transferred to the 'local level' list and does not

need to be confirmed by the Committee.

3. A White-necked Heron, near Kerikeri, 3 October 1981. Accepted.

4. An Antarctic Tern, Waikanae River, 8 November 1981. Not Accepted.

A difficult bird to identify, partly due to our present incomplete knowledge. A number of unclear points and minor discrepancies made positive identification impossible. A pity that some of the many willing local birdwatchers were not called out to add their observations and possibly to settle the identification.

5. A Great Knot, Farewell Spit, 19-21 November 1981. Accepted.

And four reports of Common Terns:—

1. 1, Point Chevalier, Auckland, 21 November 1980.

2. 1 or 2, Lake Horowhenua, Levin, 29 November 1980.

3. 1, Hokianga Harbour, 30 November, 1980.

4. 5 to 8, Palliser Point, Wellington, 29 October 1981.

None of these is accepted at present.

These reports included full descriptions, photographs and reports from more than one observer of the same bird or birds. Non-acceptance is on the grounds of our ignorance rather than shortcomings on the observers' part. As we receive more details of the eastern race of this species, these reports will be reviewed and it is hoped that most will be eventually accepted.

We would like to receive accounts of birds that may be of this species, however doubtful, if reasonable observations have been noted.

Committee Members:— B. D. Bell, Dr B. D. Bell, B. D. Heather, P. M. Sagar and J. E. Squire.

J. E. SQUIRE, *Secretary*

Black-fronted Tern inquiry

In the absence of the South Island co-ordinator on higher things overseas, the North Island co-ordinator has struggled on without knowing what has been happening in some critical parts of the South Island. Therefore, he cannot give a complete report for the June-July period.

North Island

We think we now have a reasonable idea of numbers and the seasonal timetable because events are simpler and numbers much fewer than in the south. We know that more of the terns come north than most North Islanders realised but far fewer than many South Islanders thought, on analogy with waders. In the

north, the terns come ashore in very few places, apparently travelling long distances to them, the major few places being the Tarawera and Rangitaiki mouths in Bay of Plenty, the combined Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro mouths (Waitangi) near Clive, Hawkes Bay, Waikanae mouth on Wellington west coast, and the outlet to Lake Onoke, south Wairarapa coast. Elsewhere, the Black-fronted Tern is rarely or never seen.

The fluctuating numbers found in the southern North Island and perhaps as far north as Hawkes Bay does suggest that the birds are a spill-over from the eastern South Island rather than permanent autumn and winter flocks, the numbers varying according to how many birds wander north to feed in Cook Strait and beyond from time to time. However, this is only a guess.

The number of juveniles has been low everywhere but on the Wairarapa coast in autumn. In the following notes, juveniles are the bracketed numbers.

Bay of Plenty: From 4 in early April to 14 (1) in late April, 22 (2) in May, Max. 30 (4) in June, and 41 (4) to 55 (5) in July. (Paddy Latham). One at Matahui Point, western Tauranga Harbour, the only one seen in a lot of looking by Brian Chudleigh of Katikati.

Tarnaki / Manawatu / west Wellington: Apart from one at Rangitikei mouth (Bulls), one at Waikawa Beach and two in a field near Lake Horowhenua near Levin, and two at Manawatu estuary, all on one occasion only, Waikanae has been the only fairly regular site, maximum April 28 (10) and June 36 (7). (Alan Tennyson, Charles Fleming, Barrie Heather, Alan Gollop). Despite much beach patrolling and full dune-lake surveys by Manawatu members, no Black-fronted Terns were seen.

Gisborne/Hawkes Bay: Despite regular checks by Bruce Keeley and others, none was seen in Poverty Bay, which is surprising. At Clive, between Napier and Hastings, from 3 (1) in late March to 13 (1) in late April, max. 44 (2) in late May, 62 (6) in June, and 58+ (8+) in July. Numbers at roost have fluctuated widely, however, below these monthly maxima, and so the real numbers present may be irregular and the birds may be moving up and down the coast from the South Island, at least partly. After a major sleuthing job, a feeding and roosting place several kilometres inland was found; as in Bay of Plenty, some but not most of the terns were using these few fields in a rather unpredictable pattern, mostly in July. (Kathleen Todd, Wayne & Margaret Twydale, Janet Lloyd, Barbara Taylor, Rosalie Giblin).

Wairarapa: Lake Ferry, from 5 (1) in mid-February, in late Feb, 20 (14) in early March, an unexpected 140+ (82+) in late March, counts of 22 (11) and 36+ (14) in April, 32 in May, and 30 (7) in early June. During June and July, few or no terns seen (including White-fronted), apart from a sudden 66 on 17 July, but up to 8 were seen several times some kilometres inland near Pirinoa or the floodgates at south end of L. Wairarapa. (Dave Sim, Barrie Heather, John Squire).

South Island

The South Island co-ordinator arrived home to hear that the North Island co-ordinator was about to depart overseas! There must be more to this inquiry than meets the eye.

Counts in the South Island show that numbers still fluctuate widely at most locations. This may be overcome by making more detailed counts at a few areas rather than a few counts at many areas.

This summer it is planned to colour band chicks in order to follow plumage changes in detail, and if enough colour combinations are available we may be able to monitor movements of birds from one area to another. But more about that in the December *OSNZ news*.

Lack of time has meant that I have not been able to make a detailed analysis of winter counts and the following are only regional summaries.

Nelson: Very few seen rarely about Nelson Haven. Motueka River mouth, the main roosting place; up to 30 in May, 22 (3) on 20 June. Farewell Spit, c. 125 (7) on 23 June; feeding over wet pasture on Puponga Farm Park, up to 25 (5). (Jenny Hawkins, Barrie Heather, *et al.*).

Marlborough: Numbers fluctuate widely but usually few seen at the Wairau Rivermouth: 7 in February, 3-400 in May, none in June. Small groups seen over paddocks close to the Wairau River (Pauline Jenkins, Donald Bates, Bill Cash). Bev Elliott reports small numbers around Kaikoura with 12 at the Lyell Creekmouth in May, 2 and 4 at the Kowhai Rivermouth in February and June respectively, 14 (5) at the Kahutara Rivermouth in February and 42 and 3 feeding at sea off Seal Point in May and June respectively.

Canterbury: It seems that you cannot predict from one year to the next where large numbers are going to roost. In 1981 we were counting 240+ at the Ashley Rivermouth but this year we were lucky to get more than 25 at any one time. Most coastal areas were visited at least once during June but some were

visited several times. The following are maximum counts for June only: Kahutara Rivermouth c.150, Conway Rivermouth c.170, Waipara Rivermouth 9, Ashworth's Lagoon 1, Ashley Rivermouth 19, Waimakariri Rivermouth 2, Avon-Heathcote Estuary 14, Birdlings Flat 2, Kaitorete Spit 10-20, Lake Ellesmere 4-10, Cooper's Lagoon c.50, Rakaia Rivermouth c.30, coast north of Rakaia Rivermouth 30+, Ashburton Rivermouth 79, Rangitara Rivermouth 80, Orari Rivermouth 25, Opihi Rivermouth 142, Washdyke Lagoon c.20, Wainono Lagoon 6. None was seen at Hurunui Rivermouth, Blythe Rivermouth, Hinds Rivermouth, Pareora Rivermouth and Waitaki Rivermouth.

In addition several flocks of birds were seen inland during this period. These included 165 at Waireka, 50-100 near Darfield and 50-100 up the Rakaia River. Therefore coastal and inland counts of birds in Canterbury during June were in the range of 1000-1200 birds.

However, by July the picture had changed completely showing that the terns certainly were not favouring any particular roosts or was it just because these counts were made at a different time of day? e.g. Hurunui Rivermouth 39, Hinds Rivermouth 23 and Opihi Rivermouth 3 (Colin O'Donnell, Jack Cowie, Barry Armstrong, E. Graham, F. Ross, Donald Geddes, P. Howden, M. & W. Lane, K. Hughey).

West Coast: No Black-fronted Terns have been seen during the winter. (Stewart Lauder).

BARRIE HEATHER & PAUL SAGAR

Band and Tag

Although the Banding Office was supposed to stay in the present premises for only three months, about five months have passed since we moved in and there is still no sign of another shift. Certainly something to be grateful for.

Some operators have expressed their worries over the frequent shifts that have plagued the Banding Office over the last few years. Indeed, a nomadic existence such as ours is certainly not the most effective and safe way of running the office, but we have things in hand and can prevent disasters. Delays in processing data cannot be overcome though and that is certainly unfortunate. However, we have been informed that this time we will not be shifted until accommodation for the Wildlife Service as a whole is found and that would mean the end of our moving around. We keep our fingers crossed.

A major part of the Bird Banders

Manual has been issued to all permit holders. Unfortunately an over-eager mailman sent them off immediately instead of one week later as instructed. This resulted in a pre-dated accompanying letter. We would like to apologise for any confusion that this may have caused.

By the way, there are still a lot of operators who have not paid their \$10 for the manual. If this applies to you, please pay as soon as possible.

Some people have expressed feelings that \$10 is too much for the manual. We feel that this is unfounded. First of all, \$10 is a token amount nowadays. Secondly, the rule that every permit holder should own a manual, announced when we changed the permit system, did not attract any criticism from operators. Then it was felt that a small contribution from operators towards the running of the scheme was fair but we were not in favour of the system used in many overseas countries, where operators either pay an annual fee or are charged for their metal bands. That is far more expensive than our one-time payment for the manual. Thirdly, the money we receive for the manual is used for the benefit of all operators. It enables us to keep better stocks of colour bands, mist nets, pliers, scales, etc. for your convenience. So please pay promptly.

The starting of the Banding Computer System is taking a lot of time. Currently we are loading about three batches of punchcards/day. This will take the best part of the next three months because it is a job that must be done with care so that the batches do not get mixed up, causing long delays later. We will keep you informed of our progress.

Most corrections for the Bird Atlas have now been dealt with and we are at the stage where mapping can start. However, actual mapping will have to wait until October, when Chris Robertson returns from overseas.

Some operators, whose permits expired at the end of August, are now banding without a current permit. Please check your permit and if necessary, fill in a Permit Application form and forward to our office together with your old permit. Note that when a permit has expired all bands, schedules, etc., should immediately be forwarded to the Banding Office if no renewal is requested.

Species Permits — Three new permits were issued during the past few months. One for Spur-winged Plover in the Blenheim area; one for Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Australasian Harrier in the Whakatan area; and one for Stewart Island Kiwi and Stewart Island Robin.

Bird surveys in Auckland region

Three surveys are reported in *Tara* No. 26, the Auckland region newsletter. The first was the 1982 census of the Muriwai Dune Lakes on 7 February, organised by Gwen Pulham. This survey included visits to the 22 lakes now remaining and to the sites of several that have recently turned to reedbeds. Paradise Duck occurred widely and the count of 94 was a marked increase on previous years. However, the Dabchick total of 45, on just six lakes, was only about half the total of 1974 and 1975. The Mallard/Grey Duck tally was 560, but only 4 Shoveler, 4 Grey Teal and no Scaup were found. Eight Bitterns were counted, on three lakes.

The other two surveys involved weekend trips to islands. Ten members visited Waiheke on 19-21 February, to explore habitats in the more remote, eastern sector of the island. Among 49 species recorded, notable finds were a flock of 23 N.Z. Dotterels at Te Matuku Bay, 600 White-fronted Terns around various of the wharves, 56 N.Z. Pigeons including one flock of 20, and 12 Kakas in a single flight from native forest at Man o' War Bay. Thirteen Pipits were counted along the metalled roads traversed by the party's hired car and the Land Rover of Russell and Joy St. Paul.

The gale on Good Friday notwithstanding, the visit to Great Barrier Island, led by Ken Bond, also yielded 49 species. 200 Brown Teal were counted and other species included 4 Banded Rails, 11 N.Z. Dotterels, 107 Banded Dotterels, 4 Wrybills, 2 Golden Plovers, 17 Variable Oystercatchers, 12 Kakas, 5 Red-crowned Parakeets and 2 Pipits. Of the 15 Caspian Terns sighted, 3 were shown by colour bands to have hailed from one of the mainland colonies.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Colour-dyed waders

In August and September 1982 a team of nearly 60 people are participating in the Australasian Wader Studies Group North-west Australia Expedition. This month-long research expedition is centred in the Broome-Port Hedland area in northern Western Australia, where over 150,000 migratory waders spend the summer months. On this expedition it is planned to cannon-net waders and colour-dye them on the underparts with picric acid. This is a bright yellow dye which fades to orange after a week or so, and lasts for up to four months. People visiting coastal areas or areas where waders are present, anywhere in Australia and New Zealand, are asked

to watch for colour-dyed birds and report the details of any sightings to the addresses below. Date, place (latitude and longitude if possible), number of birds dyed, size of flock and habitat should be noted. The colour dyeing involves all species of waders.

The Secretary, Australian Bird Banding Scheme, CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research, P.O. Box 84, Lyneham 2602 A.C.T. Australia. OR. Australasian Wader Studies Group C/o Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds 3039 Victoria, Australia.

BRETT LANE, *National Co-ordinator, Australasian Wader Studies Group*

Fantail and cat

At 1000 hrs on 10/5/82 I saw a cat creeping along the edge of some trees in suburban Tawa. A Fantail was seen to fly down and flit just out of the cat's reach. It would call and hover, then fly back up into the foliage. Then the bird would work its way down through the branches and fly down to the cat again, flutter about and call before returning to the trees. This sequence of events happened three times. It was too late for breeding and nest protection so what could the Fantail be gaining from this activity?

MICHAEL TURNER

Happy birthday Tara!

For the past six years Auckland members have been producing their distinctively covered quarterly journal *Tara* and mailing it to some 95 regular subscribers. This journal was the inspiration of Doug Booth who suggested the idea in mid-1976 and in spite of some pessimism by some members then, the near extinction of that office monster *Gestetorium duplicatoris*, difficulties with typing, rapidly rising costs and lack of copy, *Tara* has just completed its 25th edition. Many are the good stories that as yet remain untold from the abundance of exciting things that are afoot in Auckland — rare species falling thick and fast on catless Little Barrier Island, Kiwi breeding projects in the Waitakeres, cannon netting in the Firth of Thames, but quarter by quarter *Tara* keeps subscribers informed of meetings, censuses, field projects and entertains with articles on a wide variety of interesting topics.

New subscribers are most welcome and should send \$3.00 to the editor at 12 Komaru Street, Remuera, Auckland, for the four 1982 copies.

ROBIN CHILD

Some notes from the South-west Pacific Expedition

As this edition of *OSNZ news* goes to press, 'Derwent' is in Lautoka, Fiji, after sailing 5,600 km from New Zealand via the Kermadecs, Tonga, American and Western Samoa and the eastern and southern parts of the Fiji Group.

We set sail from Whangarei on 17 May, and four days later arrived off Curtis and Cheeseman Islands of the Kermadecs Group. Colin Miskelly and Tony Crocker were put ashore on the north side of Curtis Island for a few hours. They reported that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Black-winged Petrels were still feeding large downy chicks, while Kermadec Little Shearwaters were just about to begin breeding. A notable find was the chick of a White-bellied Storm Petrel. This species had not been recorded breeding on the Kermadecs previously. However, it has been suspected for some years that the species might be breeding somewhere in the group. A Phoenix Petrel was seen soaring high over the slopes of Curtis Island and attempting to land. It is possible that this species also breeds there. Offshore there were thousands of Grey Ternlets and smaller numbers of White-capped Noddies. We had several dozen Blue-faced Boobies and a few Red-tailed Tropicbirds soaring around the boat while we stood off the northern side of Curtis Island.

Next day a brief visit was made to Macaulay Island, about 64 km north of Curtis Island. Immense numbers of Grey Ternlets were seen offshore on the leeward side of Macaulay. A continuous stream of Black-winged Petrels heading inland over the cliffs were feeding well grown young. Meanwhile there were many fledgling Wedge-tailed Shearwaters leaving the island. These flew rather clumsily, and some flopped into the water where they were seen bathing and preening.

There were still a few young White-naped Petrels ashore but many had already fledged and we saw some of these at sea around Macaulay and northwards towards Tonga. Young White-naped Petrels have distinctive silver-grey upperparts, with distinctive M marking. Adults in worn plumage are dark brown above and the M Marking is less distinctive. That night one of the young White-naped Petrels flew aboard so we had a good opportunity to study this handsome large gaffly petrel.

Four days out from Macaulay, including one spent becalmed, we sighted 'Ata, the southern outlier of the Tonga Group. We soon had all three species

of boobies soaring about the boat and the forested slopes of the island were festooned with nesting Red-footed Boobies. Unfortunately there was a fresh wind blowing and we were unable to stand in close to 'Ata to make more lengthy observations.

Next day we arrived in Nuku'alofa, just in time to experience an unpredicted tropical cyclone, which swept through southern Tonga with winds of 85-120 knots. We were forced to abandon our anchorage off Nuku'alofa and shift across the bay — fortunately our anchor held in the new spot.

The Forestry Division provided transport and accommodation on 'Eua, the big island south-east of Tongatapu. There is no anchorage at 'Eua so we left 'Derwent' at Nuku'alofa, with part of the crew aboard. The rest of us took one of the local ferries to 'Eua where we surveyed birds in modified and unmodified forests. One of the most conspicuous species was the large Red-breasted Musk Parrot, which is common.

In Tonga we had difficulties getting permission to visit several islands in the southern part of the group. Consequently we were forced to miss landing on Hunga Tonga, Hunga Ha'apai and Kelelesia.

Then we headed northwards via the high volcanic islands of Tofua, Kao and Late, on our way to the Vava'u Group. Part of one day was spent ashore on Late, a well forested uninhabited island about the size of Auckland's Rangitoto Island. It would make a superb nature reserve.

In the Vava'u Group we visited many of the smaller islands that were visited by the Whitney South Sea Expedition in the 1920's. In Vava'u it was pleasing to see the Tonga Whistler in good numbers, and we obtained some clear recordings of its distinctive song.

The highlight of our visit to Tonga was the trip to the uninhabited volcanic island of Fonvalei, 64 km north-west of Vava'u. This island had not been visited by ornithologists since the Whitney Expedition nearly 60 years ago. Evidently Greater Frigatebirds breed on Fonvalei as adult males were displaying in the low trees just above the beach where we landed. Lesser Frigatebirds were seen in small numbers. Red-footed and Brown Boobies also breed on the island, as do Common Noddies, White and Red-tailed Tropicbirds, Sooty Terns, White Terns and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. The shearwaters had just finished breeding and the slopes beneath the *Hibiscus* forest were honeycombed with their burrows. A new find for Fonvalei were

Herald Petrels, apparently breeding on the island. This species breeds on other islands in Tonga.

There were few land birds on Fonvalei but Wattled Honeyeater, Polynesian Starling, Pacific Pigeon and Friendly Ground Dove were recorded. Banded Rail, Swampphen and Spotless Crake were found in fern on the crater rim and on the grassy crater floor.

Like Late, Fonvalei would be worthy of receiving some sort of reserve status, since it is clearly a valuable seabird island in the northern Tongan region.

From Vava'u we sailed northwards to American Samoa, where we made brief surveys of forest birds and waders. Most of our time in the Samoas was spent in Western Samoa, on the islands of Upolu and Savai'i, where we searched for forest birds, especially endangered species such as Ma'o, Samoan Silvereye and Tooth-billed Pigeon.

We received considerable assistance from the New Zealanders working in the Samoan Forestry Section, who provided transport and accommodation. On Upolu a very rewarding visit was made to the new O Le Pupu Pu'e National Park on the south side of the island. The park comprises a belt of forest extending unbroken from sea level to the 1100 m summit of Upolu. We had no difficulty locating the Ma'o in the montane valleys of the park. The forest looked ideal for Tooth-billed Parrot. If it still exists on Upolu this would be the place to look for it.

We sailed to Asau, at the north-western end of the big island of Savai'i, where we spent 10 days in the hinterland. We camped for several days on the edge of virgin rain forest at the 900 m level. There were several pairs of Ma'os within a short distance of our camp. Small flocks of Samoan Silvereyes were seen on several occasions, and we succeeded in our quest to find the Tooth-billed Pigeon. At least 12 separate sightings were made of this distinctive and rather elusive species.

White-browed Rail seems to be widespread on Savai'i. We located them in a swamp near sea level at Vaisala and 900 m up the slopes of the island where they were flushed from long wet grass on the roadsides.

From our sheltered anchorage at Asau we set sail for Suva. A very wet week was spent in Suva, where we introduced ourselves to Fergus Clunie at the Fiji Museum. We were given some helpful advice about places to go near Suva to observe endemics such as Pink-billed Parrotfinch and Black-faced Shrikebill. The murky weather did not make the birding very easy. However,

we made several rewarding visits to Joske's Thumb and Mt. Koroboba. It was exciting to have Giant Honeyeaters yodelling around our ears despite the persistent rain.

From Suva we sailed eastwards to the island of Ngau, about 56 km from Viti Levu. Ngau lacks many of the small forest birds that occur on Viti Levu. However, this island has the special distinction of being the place where the unique specimen of MacGillivray's Petrel was collected last century. If this species survives there would seem to be no lack of suitable high forested ridges where it might still breed in small numbers. The top of the island has dense virgin forest. Only Kiore were caught in our trap line and no wild cats were seen. Fortunately Mongoose and wild pigs are absent so conditions would seem to be favourable for petrels to breed. An intensive search for this, the least known of all petrels, would seem to be well worthwhile.

Heading south to Kadavu, we anchored in Toubu Kavala, a sheltered harbour at the north east end of the island. The surrounding hills still have a good covering of forest. However, the canopy has been damaged by recent hurricanes. We had no trouble locating Kadavu's endemics, the Fantail, Honeyeater and Whistling Dove.

During the past few days we have been on Lautoka where we have had some assistance from the staff of the Fijian Pine Commission, who have given us transport to several dry zone forests which have been left as reserves in their plantings of *Pinus caribaea*. Birds are in surprising numbers in these small forest remnants, e.g. Harrier, Fiji Goshawk, Peale's Pigeon, Golden Dove, Yellow-breasted Musk Parrot, Blue-crested Broadbill, Spotted Fantail, Slaty Flycatcher, Yellow and Grey-backed Silvereyes, Orange-breasted and Wattled Honeyeaters, Red-headed Parrotfinch, Fiji and Black-faced Shrikebills.

Mid-August has been spent in the Yasawa Group west of Viti Levu. Our plans were modified somewhat by the weather because we had several days of strong winds. This caused us to abandon a visit to Round Island. However, we managed to land on Naviti, Nanuya Lailai and Sawa-i-lau in the Yasawa Group, and also White Rock, a stack between the Yasawa Group and Lautoka. This stack has breeding colonies of Brown Boobies, White-capped Noddies and Black-naped Terns.

The next stage of our expedition takes us to Vanuatu and New Caledonia before returning to Whangarei in late September.

The following OSNZ members are

taking part in the expedition: Beth Brown, John Brown, Tony Crocker, Gillian Eller, Anthea Goodwin, Anton Habraken, Maria Hansby, Tim Lovegrove, Colin Miskelly, Bill Ringer, Nan Rothwell and George Schiska.

The support that the expedition has received from the Ornithological Society is acknowledged with thanks.

TIM LOVEGROVE

Notes from a roving ornithologist

During the past few months I have visited a number of bird haunts and the following observations may be of interest to members.

Counts at Lake Ellesmere have shown that many Arctic waders are late leavers. On 22/4/82 88 Red-necked Stints, 26 Curlew Sandpipers, 3 Marsh Sandpipers and 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper were still present. However, by 4/5/82 the new game shooting season possibly had an effect on bird counts. Only 3 Red-necked Stints, 12 Curlew Sandpipers (most in breeding plumage), 8 Wrybills and c.630 Banded Dotterels were present.

Closer to Christchurch, the Bromley sewage ponds had a royal showing in mid-April, when 15 Royal Spoonbills crowned the pine trees, but only 1 was left on 5 May.

On 14/5/82 I visited Tukituki, Waitangi, Ahuriri Lagoon and Westshore Inlet with John and Peter Berry of Havelock North. These areas support a large variety of estuarine species and we were not disappointed during our visit. At Tukituki and Waitangi Estuaries 10 Black-fronted Terns, 25 Caspian Terns, 280+ Black-billed Gulls, 1 Bittern, 4 White Herons and a few wintering Black-fronted Dotterels were present. Of special interest at Ahuriri and Westshore were 25 Dabchicks, 1 Little Egret, 4 Royal Spoonbills, 220+ Grey Teal, 12 Bar-tailed Godwits, 25 SIPO, 1 Variable Oystercatcher and 15 Caspian Terns.

On 16/5/82 I visited Maketu and Little Waihi Estuaries in the Bay of Plenty and recorded 20 N.Z. Dotterels, 6 Wrybills, 100+ Banded Dotterels, 24 Bar-tailed Godwits, 13 SIPOs, 74 Variable Oystercatchers and 9 Caspian Terns. The following day at Sulphur Point, Tauranga, only 9 Bar-tailed Godwits were seen but a further 26 were feeding off Matapihi Point at low tide. A flight of c.100 Wrybills and c.20 N.Z. Dotterels briefly visited Sulphur Point during the count.

At Matata and Tarawera Rivermouths on 18/5/82 1 White Heron, 11 Black-

fronted Terns, 2 N.Z. Dotterels and 45 Scaup were counted.

Lake Horowhenua seems to be a favoured site for Dabchick during the shooting season. On 11/5/82 I counted 191 but the true number was probably over 200 as many were feeding during the count. Three Spur-winged Plovers were on adjacent paddocks.

On 15/5/82 my count at Sulphur Bay, Rotorua, revealed 75 Dabchicks where there had been only 3 in summer. The shag colony was deserted and only 100 or so Little Black Shags remained of the 1000-1500 using the island in late summer. Nearly 600 Scaup were sheltering in willows near Ohinemutu and 100 Pied Stilts were overwintering near the Travel Lodge.

GRAEME TAYLOR

Long-lived waders

Late last year Sylvia Reed wrote to the U.K. to enquire whether the finding of one of the N.Z. Dotterels banded as a chick by Ross McKenzie and still alive at 31 years might constitute some sort of record. The reply from Robert Hudson of the B.T.O. suggests that it is certainly a world record for a bird of that size. One older record for a wader is that of a Curlew *Numenius arquata* banded in Sweden, which was shot when 31 years and 6½ months old.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Sunday Island Petrel

On the morning of 4/6/82, after a night of heavy rain and fairly strong easterly winds, an unusual bird was found at the top of Rawene Peninsula by Duncan Salmond. I identified it provisionally as a Sunday Island (Black-capped) Petrel, and this was confirmed later when Mark Bellingham and I measured and photographed it. The black cap and white collar were particularly striking.

A Road Services bus took the bird to the Wildlife Service office at Whangarei and even after that experience it was fit enough to be released at once.

KATHLEEN BRASH

Banding Mail Bag

Band recoveries kept Mrs Billington busy during the past two months. To give you an idea of returns during July and August — 652 bands were received in the Banding Office. Not surprisingly with the game season just closed in most parts of the country, game birds made up the majority of the returns. 271 ducks (Mallard and Grey); 147 Black

Swans; 66 Canada Geese; 63 Paradise Ducks; 55 Shovelers; 5 Pukekos; 1 Chukor and 1 Pheasant were reported shot or found dead.

Recoveries in the non-game section were: 13 Red-billed Gulls; 10 Black-backed Gulls; 3 Australasian Harriers; 4 Silvertails; 3 Blue Penguins; 2 SIPOs; 2 Royal Albatross; 1 Black-browed Mollymawk; 1 Caspian Tern; 1 Song Thrush; 1 Myna and 1 House Sparrow.

Some of the more interesting recoveries are detailed below.

M-19437 Black-browed Mollymawk, banded as an adult of unknown age and sex in the Bull Rock area on Campbell Island on 23/9/68. It was found dead on a beach at the south end of Lord Howe Island on 16/7/82.

131-41389 Southern Giant Petrel, banded as an adult of unknown age and sex on Nelly Island, Frazier Group, Casey, Antarctica (lat. 66°22'S, long. 110°28'E) on 21/1/80. The bird was found dead, badly decomposed, at Mason's Bay, Stewart Island, on 28/8/81. This was about 4000 km from the place of banding.

17-23146 Grey Duck, probably was not the culinary treat the hunter envisaged when he shot this bird of over 19 years. Banded as an adult male at Lake Waihi on 5/2/64, the bird was recovered in the Mercer area on 2/5/82.

B-13035 House Sparrow, banded as an adult female at Broad Bay, Otago Peninsula on 10/4/71. The bird was killed by a cat and recovered in the same area on 10/6/82 at the respectable age of 11+ years. Rod Morris of the Natural History Unit of TV N.Z. reported this recovery to us and guess what . . . the bird subsequently starred in one of the Wildtrack programmes.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

Regional Roundup

Far North/Northland: While the rest of the country continues with Whitehead, Yellowhead, Brown Creeper and Black-fronted Tern surveys, our northernmost region has to be content with its regular Harbour Survey and Beach Patrols as none of these species occurs there. David and Ruth Crockett have been away in Cambridge, England, during August where they were invited to participate in the International Council for Bird Preservation's workshop and symposium on seabird conservation.

Auckland / South Auckland: These regions are combining to hold a residential wader course during Labour Weekend. The course will be based at Camp Morley, South Manukau Harbour.

Morning discussions will be followed by afternoon field trips and topics will include identification, stalking, counting, note taking, habitat preferences and affinities between species.

Waikato: In April the first official survey of Hamilton Lake produced 1368 Mallard, 4 Grey Duck, 58 Coot, 81 Black Swans, 4 Canada Geese, 23 Black Shags, 17 Little Shags, 15 Pukekos and 2 Mute Swans. While most regions looked in despair for Cattle Egrets, John and Betty Seddon saw 80 from the air at Huntly West Road on 9/6/82.

Bay of Plenty: Roy Weston reports that White-fronted Terns returned to breed in two separate colonies on Port Ohope Spit last summer. They last bred there about 1974. High tides washed out some of the 200+ nests but 30 juvenile terns were counted on 23/2/82.

Also Roy counted 42 N.Z. Dotterels on the spit on 21/3/82; none carried colour bands.

Volcanic Plateau: Kokako appear to have been a major interest last summer. One nest is known to have been lost to a predator but two nests under the care of the Wildlife Service in the Kaharoa region fledged chicks successfully and a juvenile was seen in Pureora.

Manawatu/Wanganui: Hazel Newton reports that Spur-winged Plovers continue to increase in numbers at Westmere and Seafield, near Wanganui.

The winter count at the Manawatu Estuary on 27/6/82 produced good birding. Results were: 9 Black Shags, 1 Little Shag, 7 Little Black Shags, 15 White-faced Herons, 26 Royal Spoonbills, 21 Cattle Egrets, 12 Mallards, 2 Harriers, 151 Pukekos, 35 SIPOs, 15 Banded Dotterels, 21 Wrybills, 33 Bar-tailed Godwits, 138 Pied Stilts, 187 Black-backed Gulls and 5 Caspian Terns. *Wellington:* The Black-fronted Dotterel seen at Waikanae Estuary during the AGM field trip was the first to be recorded there for eight years. Spur-winged Plovers continue to spread in the Upper Hutt Valley, new locations being a pair at Plimmer Flats and a pair at Maymorn Road.

Nelson: Jenny Hawkins reports that the first of the White-fronted Terns banded on the Boulder Bank reached the North Island in February.

There were 14 Royal Spoonbills at Motueka in June and these could be seen close enough to note their yellow 'eyebrows.'

Marlborough: By the end of July there were only 7 Cattle Egrets at Grovetown, compared with 40 last year. This seems to be the trend for most localities this winter.

Canterbury: Cattle Egret numbers are down in Canterbury also with only 28 being present at Taumutu and none recorded anywhere else in the province.

A Crested Grebe was seen at Lake Ellesmere during the winter. The first returns of northern migratory waders were reported as early as the first week in September when Dean Buzan saw some tired highly coloured Curlew Sandpipers near Embankment Road, Lake Ellesmere.

West Coast: Little Grebes appear to be having some breeding success with birds reported from new areas. Derek Only saw one near Little Totara and Bob Simpson found 2 on a small bush pond in the Kowhiterangi area. However, the grebes seem to have disappeared from their original pond at Bell Hill.

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

Farewell Spit, June census

The first census of the Spit for June was held on 22-25 June. Of course, this was the only week of the month that was not gloriously fine; however, under the anxious eye of the organiser, Noel Hellyer, a rather lively party did manage to venture on to the Spit on two days.

The totals for the two days were so similar that the wader totals, at least, were probably quite accurate. When compared with two previous counts and estimates made in mid-May and late May, the number of SIPO was up, showing that the Spit is an important wintering place for them, the number of Banded Dotterels and Bar-tailed Godwit much the same but only a fragment of the NZ populations, and the number of Knot and Turnstone down, showing that many of these move elsewhere after May. In particular the noisy parties of ebullient subadult Turnstones, so much part of the Spit life in May, were absent, the remaining birds being mostly quiet drab immatures.

The 5-6 New Zealand Dotterels were in nondescript colourless plumage, and the usual rarer species almost always at the Spit through to May such as stints, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, and vagrant dotterels, were few or none. The usual small group of Asiatic and American Whimbrels, and even a few curlews, were still there, and 13 Royal Spoonbills were at their usual spot. As expected, Black-fronted Terns were present, well over 100, including a few birds of the year, but none was seen between Puponga and Takaka.

General totals, including birds on fields back to Puponga, were SIPO 7000, Variable Oystercatcher 80, Pied Stilt, 40,

Bar-tailed Godwit 1300, Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit 1, Knot 90, Whimbrel 5 (3 Asiatic, 2 American), Curlew 3, Red-necked Stint 7, Curlew Sandpiper 1, Terek Sandpiper 1, Golden Plover 1, Banded Dotterel 1000+, NZ Dotterel 5-6, Turnstone 150.

Owing to the foul weather, a lot of time was spent watching the many birds feeding and roosting on the woolshed flat of Puponga Farm Park, with the woolshed as a very effective observatory. The party was impressed, as all previous parties have been, by the potential interest of these flats for visitors to the Park, if means could be devised to keep the flats wet and an adequate observation structure were built behind the woolshed. Here could be seen all week, SIPO, Variable Oystercatcher, godwit, including Black-tailed, dotterels, both Banded and New Zealand, Knot, stilt, Caspian and Black-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull, Paradise Shelduck, White-faced Heron, Canada Goose, Little Shag, Welcome Swallow.

The party consisted of N. Hellyer, B. Armstrong, W. Cash, P. Gaze, J. Hawkins, B. Heather, J. Fennel, S. Moore, C. O'Donnell, R. Parrish, J. & B. Seddon.
BARRIE HEATHER

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University course in ornithology

The Department of Zoology in the University of Canterbury now has a course on Ornithology for Honours III and M.Sc. students. It is run by Dr John Warham of that department assisted by Dr Peter Harper of the Department of Extension Studies.

Students enrolling for this course normally will be required to have passed a course on vertebrates. The course itself is based on a series of seminars covering topical fields of research in ornithology such as migration; the dynamics of predation and competition; island avifaunas; seabird biology; and evolution and molecular genetics.

Students will also review and discuss selected recent case studies from New Zealand and overseas which throw light on problems in managing bird populations. Some practical field and laboratory work will be required.

For further information write to Dr Warham, Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch.

JOHN WARHAM

New bird book

George Edward Lodge — *The unpublished New Zealand bird paintings* with text by Sir Charles Fleming will be available in September 1982. The artist is considered by many to be the finest British bird painter of the 20th century and Sir Charles Fleming is one of New Zealand's leading scientists. There are 89 full colour plates and the text presents a history of the birds of N.Z. from the viewpoints of geology, evolution and conservation, while accompanying each plate is an account of the discovery, biogeography and evolutionary development of the species illustrated and discusses the impact of Man and the problems of conservation today.

Sauce for the gander ?

While a small party was weatherbound on Little Barrier during the cyclone in early April, rations became a matter of close interest and new recipes were created. One gastronomic delight was named Caramel Kahlua Sauce and was used accidentally but liberally on charred chops, cabbage, potato and carrots. This was eagerly devoured with no apparent ill effects at the time of writing.

BETH BROWN

Long-tailed Skuas

Two Long-tailed Skuas were picked up on beach patrols during last summer. On 3 October 1981 Vic Hensley found one still alive on East Beach, Houhora. It died very shortly afterwards and is the second record for New Zealand. Then Pat Crombie picked up the third for N.Z. on 3 January 1982 at Muriwai, Auckland West.

RUSSELL THOMAS

The offshore islands of northern New Zealand

The Offshore Islands Research Group of the University of Auckland is organising a symposium for 10-13 May 1983.

The scope of the symposium is all the offshore islands from the Three Kings in the north to East Cape and Kawhia Harbour in the south. Contributed papers are invited on any aspect of the islands; poster space will be available.

Anyone wishing to attend is invited to contact Mr A. E. Wright, Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag, Auckland, no later than 31 December 1982.

A. E. WRIGHT

Rainbow Lorikeet (de'd) at Muriwai

In April the regular West Auckland beach patrol turned up, besides 35 seabirds of 14 species, a novelty in the shape of a Rainbow Lorikeet. We came up with three alternative theories to explain its presence: (1) it had been carried from Australia by powerful thermals and jetstream winds; (2) it had been smuggled in, but the smuggler got the wind up and threw it over the side; (3) it was a cage escape.

PAT CROMBIE

Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa

This new book is written by Dick Watling and is the first definitive account of the ornithology of this island region. The author has lived in Fiji since 1967 and this book is based on his research and experience in the region plus a thorough review of the literature. The birds are illustrated by Chloe Talbot-Kelly.

OSNZ members are offered this book at the specially reduced price of \$33.96 (this includes packing and postage within N.Z.) and copies can be obtained from Millwood Press Ltd., 291B Tinakori Road, Wellington.

Notes on the recognition of a Sooty Artifact (*Larus carbo nov. sp.*, extinct)

In May this year I was informed of an unusual bird that was reported to inhabit chimneys of houses in Howick, Auckland. One bird actually met its demise in the home of Mrs D. J. Beavis. Although I did not see it then, others were known to comment on the beautiful ashy tone of its plumage and the bird was kept as a curiosity in the collection of Mrs Margaret Willis.

In August, when confronted with a sceptic and a bowl of Sunlight and hot water, the bird visibly paled and revealed its true colours, as an apparently normal, immature Red-billed Gull.

Thus it was returned to its keeper. Ashes to ashes. A new species, prematurely extinct due to the biologically adverse effects of detergent and off-colour puns.

P.S. This is not to be taken too cinereously.

COLIN MISKELLY