

OSNZ news

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 65 December, 1992

Note Deadline for the March issue will be 10th
February.

Nesting Black Shags near Lake Kohangatera, Wellington

Peter Moore and I began studying the Black Shag colony near Lake Kohangatera, Wellington, during 1988-89 when we made monthly visits to it and two nearby lakes, primarily to count waterfowl on the lakes. The colony consisted of about 35 nests in the tops of karaka trees. While the shags were seen at the colony each month, few birds were present in the non-breeding season (December-March). Nesting activities began in April, and most clutches were laid in April-May, with a few in the period June to August. Most adults and fledglings left the colony by early September. However, usually there were a few late clutches, so that the last fledglings did not leave the colony until October or November.

In 1990, we set up a hide overlooking much of the colony. However, because of our irregular and brief visits little detailed information was obtained about the nesting behaviour and breeding success of the shags. We did band 11 nestlings though, each with a metal band and a white plastic band, the latter to signify the year they were banded.

No observations were made at the colony in 1991. However, Peter Reese joined the team this year, bringing considerable skills in hide building and photography. As a result of building a hide overlooking a few nests and making frequent observations from it during April-August, we obtained some interesting information this season of Black Shag nesting.

As in previous seasons, nesting began in early April, with much refurbishing of nests. Lone males displayed to attract mates by wing-waving, these wing movements alternatively covering and exposing a patch of white feathers on each



flank. Many of the birds at this time were resplendent in immaculate plumage, with lots of white nuptial plumes on the neck and crown.

By mid-April the first eggs were laid, and most pairs were incubating by mid-May. The adults' white plumes had almost gone by the time chicks hatched. From the hide and a blind we were able to observe the progress at five nests reasonably well. Incubation lasted a maximum of 29 days at one nest. The clutches at four nests probably consisted of 4,4,4 and 3 eggs. Of these 15 eggs at least 5 did not hatch and perhaps a sixth as well. Unhatched eggs disappeared early in the nestling stage.

Initially, the chicks were brooded constantly, with the parents taking turns through the day to brood and feed them. At two to three weeks of age the chicks were not brooded, but invariably an adult was standing at the edge of the nest. Whether an adult was present once the chicks were more than a month old seemed to depend on the size of the brood. While a single chick was invariably attended by a parent until it fledged, a 3-chick brood was often unattended.

Nestlings first flew from the nest when about 55 days old. We have yet to determine at what age fledglings leave the colony, but it seemed to be 2-4 weeks after they made their first flights. Of the 9 chicks we studied, 8 flew from the colony. There was no evidence of chick predation even though Harriers were occasionally seen hovering over the colony, and mustelids and feral cats occur in the valley.

This season we banded 18 nestlings, each with a metal and a red band. Some were seen beside Lake Kohangatera about a kilometre from the colony in August, and during one day in late October three were seen in Wellington Harbour. By having some young colour banded, we hope to determine the extent of their dispersal, and the age at first breeding. A white-banded bird (a 1990 chick) was seen at the colony in June 1992 in adult plumage, but it was not seen associated with a nest.

We hope to continue this study for several more years and so gradually build up some detailed information about the nesting of the Black Shag. We thank Michael & David Bell, Julia Brooke-White, David Cornick, Ian Flux and Mary Powlesland for assisting with the observations and the banding of nestlings.

RALPH POWLESLAND

From the President's Desk

It is subscription time again and with it comes the usual number of queries. Can we have a reduced subscription for pensioners? Could we have a cheaper rate if we did not take *Notornis*? With a small Society we do not have the capacity to give subsidies or special rates. The subscription is not that large when you consider that it includes GST, and what you receive from the Society.

Notornis is a very important and essential part of the Society; the objectives of which are to study birds and disseminate the information. Actually, if we provided a rate without *Notornis* this would not reduce current subscription levels, but would increase the rate for those wishing to continue taking the journal. This can be seen clearly in the rates for the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. However, more important is that it would not be possible to publish a journal if the print run fell much below current levels.

One pensioner pointed out that we should not look on our subscription as one for the journal, but for the total membership package and what that entails. There are many schemes and activities available to members in which all can participate e.g., nest record, beach patrol and moult schemes; various national and local projects such as the national wader counts, Pied Stilt banding, Royal Spoonbill count etc; a library through which members can get access to international ornithological journals and magazines (received in exchange for *Notornis*); local meetings and field trips; and periodically there are national training courses. These are just some of the advantages of membership.

There is an adage that "the more you put into something, the more you get from it". This is very much the case with your Society. If you actively participate in the meetings and field activities not only will you "get more for your money", but you will get more enjoyment. I am aware that some do not want to participate actively, but see their contribution as support to the Society and its objectives and this is greatly appreciated.

The Society is run on an honorary basis which means that administration costs are kept to a minimum. However, we do have to pay for postage, paper, audit fees etc.

Council is committed to holding subscriptions at the present level and is seeking support in other ways - from grants, sponsorships etc. It is also making money available for the regions so that more is returned to benefit members locally. Finally, I would like to express the Society's thanks to those members who make donations to the Society by taking out supporting membership or by rounding up their subscription to \$50.

I wish you the best for Christmas and a happy birdwatching year in 1993.

BRIAN D. BELL
President

Wanted Atlas co-ordinator

Applications are called for the position of Atlas co-ordinator. The successful applicant will be required to complete a 2-month programme by the end of March 1993. The job will entail assessing the previous Atlas project; considering the content, format and publication of the new Atlas; investigating sources of funding; and liaising with Government and other organisations.

Remuneration is available.

Job specifications are available from the Secretary.

Applications for the position must be with the Secretary,
P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.
by 25 January 1993.

New RRs

At its October meeting Council confirmed the following changes of RR.

Auckland - Mike Graham, 9 Grendon Road, Titirangi, Auckland 7 takes over from Brian Ellis.

Wairarapa - Colin Scadden, 15 Madden Place, Masterton takes over from Tenick Dennison.

Southland - Lloyd Esler, 64 Herriott Street, Invercargill takes over from Roger Sutton.

Council thanks Brian, Tenick and Roger for all their efforts on behalf of the Society.

New members

Council would like to welcome all the following new members to the Society, plus others who have re-joined.

Stuart & Jane Anderson, Rachael M. Awanui, Tom Barton, Don Brathwaite, Ian Butler, Katherine G. Caesar, Lis Cleland, Nicholas Dillon, Josie Driessen, Percy Duggan, Dutch Birding Association, Laurie Fogg, Fort Worth Zoo, S. Grantham, G.D. Hambly, Mrs E.D. Harrison, Keith Harrison, Tim Hay, Debbie Hume, Conor & Simone Holmes,

Lady Diana Isaac, Ian James, Stephen Jarvis, Helen Jonas, M. Jorgensen, Ross Legar, Lincoln University, Brian Lloyd, Rod McDonald, Mr & Mrs N.D.R. Mc Kerchar, Miss B.H. MacMillan, Hamish McWilliam, Father Georges Maurel, Suzanne Moore, David J. Riddell, Cathy Svenson, Dale Williams, Kageaki Yoshioka.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Donations

Donations have been gratefully accepted from the following members and will go to the specific projects, as requested. Thank you.

Judith Beirne, A.R. Carey, Gerry Clark, John Davenport, Patrick Evans, Dr Michael Fitzgerald, C.A. Foreman, Barry Friend, J.W. Lock, Mr & Mrs N.D.R. Mc Kerchar, Malcolm Olsen, P.F.H. Rowley, Paul & Joy Sagar, Kathleen Todd, M.A. Waller, George Watola, G.W. Wells.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Subscriptions are now due for 1993

The invoice enclosed with the September issue of *Notornis* & OSNZ news should have read - for the year ending 1993 not 1992.

My apologies for this printing error.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

OSNZ AGM - May 1993

Next year's AGM will be based at Camp Morley, near Clarks Beach, on the southern shores of Manukau Harbour, from 14 to 16 May. Accommodation will be in 10-person flats or caravan and tent sites. Visitors arriving by air will be met at the airport. Field trips will take in the Firth of Thames, Hunua Forest, Awhitu, North Waikato Head, and Manukau Harbour.

Full details of the AGM and Conference will accompany the March issue of *Notornis*.

Bird Atlas for Sale

Copies of the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand are now available at the reduced price of \$25 (with microfiche) and \$15 (without microfiche) – the price includes packaging and postage within New Zealand.

Orders and payment should be sent to OSNZ Atlas Sales, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. Cheques should be made payable to OSNZ.

Slides for the *Birds of Australasia 1994* calendar

Hopefully, some of you have seen the superb 1993 edition of this calendar produced by the RAOU and available from OSNZ. Preparations for the production of the calendar begin in April each year, and so I need to receive slides from OSNZ members for the 1994 edition by 19 March 1993.

Here are the rules:

1. The slides may depict any Australasian bird species, but preferably those native to New Zealand.
2. Each member may submit up to five slides.
3. A group of Wellington-based councillors will judge the slides received on time and those of suitable quality will be sent to the RAOU for consideration for inclusion in the calendar.
4. No prizes or remuneration will be provided by OSNZ to the photographers whose slides are sent to RAOU.
5. Great care will be taken of the slides, but members submit them at their own risk.

Please send slides to R.G. Powlesland, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Rare Birds Committee

At its October meeting Council confirmed the appointment of John Davenport as the Secretary of the Rare Birds Committee.

With the appointment of a new Secretary, Council considered it appropriate that other membership of the Rare Birds Committee should be opened up for reappointment. Therefore applications are called for membership of the Rare Birds Committee.

Applicants should have extensive experience with the identification of the major groups of birds which occur in New Zealand, particularly waders, seabirds and Australian vagrants. Access to a good ornithological library is also desirable.

Current members of the Rare Birds Committee are eligible for reappointment, but must apply in writing.

Applications must reach the Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington by 28 February 1993.

Wanted – reports of colour-banded Pied Oystercatchers

During late December/January, Pied Oystercatchers move from their inland breeding areas to spend the autumn and early winter in coastal areas. Two current studies of Pied Oystercatchers have resulted in birds being colour banded and reports of these birds are important to determine the dispersal patterns of the species.

Donald Geddes and Paul Sagar are into the sixth year of their long-term study of oystercatchers which nest on farmland in Mid Canterbury. They reported previously (*OSNZ news 57* December 1990) about preliminary results of sightings away from their study area. Currently they have reports of 99 sightings representing 38 birds banded as adults, plus 36 sightings of birds banded as chicks. Although this represents about 30% of all the adults they have banded (a remarkably high proportion), more sightings are required to determine whether the same birds return to the same estuaries year after year, and whether the dispersal patterns of males is the same as that for females.

All banded birds in this study have an orange band in the combination.

The second study is being conducted on birds which nest on the Ahuriri River, MacKenzie Basin. This is part of a long-term study of waterbirds which inhabit the riverbed, and is coordinated by Richard Maloney, Department of Conservation, Twizel.

All banded Pied Oystercatchers in this study have a black band in the combination.

Please report all sightings of colour-banded oystercatchers to the Banding Office, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

PAUL SAGAR

Request for reprints on owls

Authors of articles or publications dealing with owls wishing them to be listed in the second edition of a *Working Bibliography of the Owls of the World* are asked to send reprints to: Richard J. Clark, The Owl Bibliography, c/o Department of Biology, York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA USA 17405-7199.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1993 NOW DUE

Mystery Bird # 9

The long tail, bill structure and plumage of mystery bird # 9 should have indicated to most readers that it is a shag or cormorant (I refer to shags as the pale-legged species, cormorants as the dark-legged species). Those who read mystery bird # 5 (*OSNZ news 61*) will realise that New Zealand has the greatest number of species of shags and cormorants of any country in the world, but certain species are ruled out immediately by the pure white underparts of this bird. The white underparts eliminate Black Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, juvenile and white-throated phase Little Cormorants; Spotted, Pitt Island and Stewart Island Shags all have greyish or dark underparts. Campbell Island Shags have a dark throat band so is also ruled out.



Pied form of the Little Cormorant.
(Photo Don Hadden)

Many of our shags have a white alar bar on the wings, but the angle of the photograph precludes determining whether this occurs on our mystery bird. The amount of white on the face of the bird is the next pointer, as all of the Auckland, MacQuarie, Chatham and Stewart Islands shags have dark sides to the head. This leaves only Pied and pied phase Little Cormorant to consider.

From here there are several factors which lead to an identification. The white on the cheeks extends forwards above the eyes to the forehead, the tail is quite long relative to the body, the bill relatively short, and the size is fairly small when compared with the power pole.

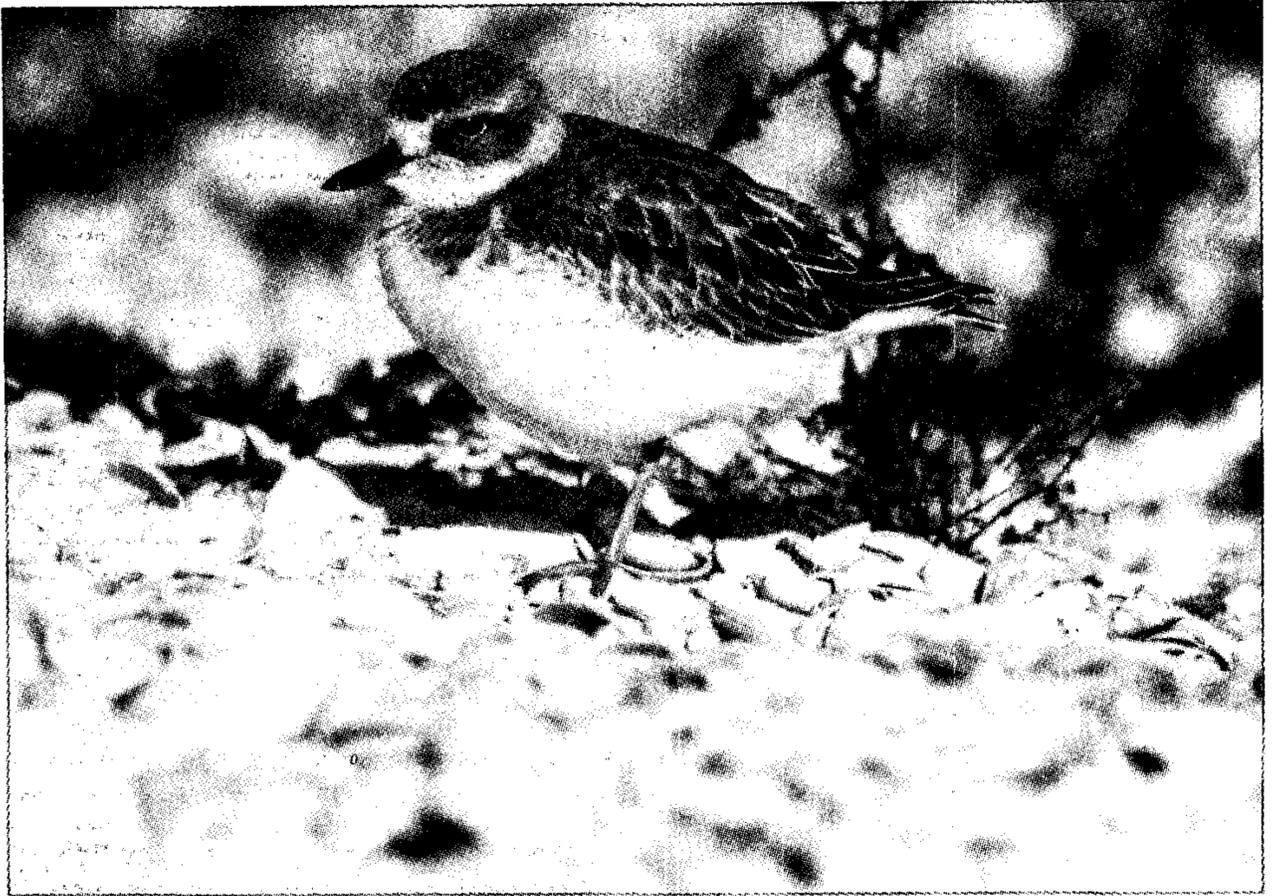
These features show the bird to be a pied form Little Cormorant. Pied Cormorant being a much larger bird with a relatively longer bill and shorter tail, and having bare yellow skin in front of the eyes. Pied Cormorants also have black flanks, although how much of the actual flank feathering is visible in the mystery bird is debatable.

Had we been so inclined, we could have cheated a little and eliminated most of the subantarctic shags on the basis of the habitat - how many old power poles are

there on these islands - but that wouldn't help your birdwatching skills much.

Little Cormorants are widespread throughout New Zealand, and are the only pied cormorant to be seen away from the coasts. However, when in juvenile plumage they are all dark which can lead to confusion with the Little Black Cormorant. In this case the bill colour and length and tail length are distinguishing features, the Little Cormorant having a short yellowish bill and long tail, and Little Black having a long black bill and short tail. It is perhaps unfortunate that the Australian refer to the Little Cormorant as the Little Pied Cormorant, as in New Zealand we also get white-throated forms of the same species.

PHIL BATTLEY



Mystery Bird # 10

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

Royal Spoonbills – June 1992

Compared to previous years, the total count of Royal Spoonbills this winter was very encouraging. Whether this was due to increased awareness of the presence of spoonbills, an improved coverage, or better communication, is not known; most likely is that it was a combination of these factors. It's also possible that low mortality of chicks contributed to the increased total. And maybe we did have some migrants from Australia.

The results, with winter 1991 figures for comparison, were:

Region	1992 numbers	1991 numbers
Far North	40	0
Northland	83	66
Auckland	22	24
South Auckland	1	0
Waikato	6	3
BoP	14	0
Gisborne	15	14
Taranaki	1	1
Manawatu	35	21
Hawke's Bay	21	22
Wellington	0	1
Nelson	98	61
Marlborough	0	7
Canterbury	35	18
West Coast	6	4
TOTAL	377	242

These figures represent an increase of 135 birds (55.8%) since 1991.

It is interesting to note that 40 spoonbills occurred at Parengarenga, compared to nil last year. There were an

extra 17 at Rangaunu and 14 at Kaituna Cut, compared to nil last year. Marlborough was, unfortunately, in flood during the winter census; that doesn't explain the increases in Nelson and Canterbury though. There were 45 spoonbills at Farewell Spit, 34 at Motueka, and 19 at Waimea. These represented an increase in numbers at Farewell Spit while those at Motueka and Waimea remained much the same as in 1991. In Canterbury, spoonbills increased from 16 in 1991 to 24 in 1992 at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary; 9 more birds were counted at lake Ellesmere.

All in all the total of 377 is an incredibly high number, a real success story.

I would like to thank all participants for their efforts. Let's see what comes out of the Waitangi Day count in 1993.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

REMINDER!
ROYAL SPOONBILL CENSUS
WAITANGI DAY 1993

A project in Fiji

Some members will be aware that a group of Auckland and Waikato people are planning to build a small birdwatching retreat in the rainforests at Devo on the Tunuloa Peninsula, Vanua Levu, Fiji. This initiative started after a survey of Silktail in the area by Rick Thorpe of Hamilton, showed that the numbers of these birds had declined in logged areas. A tourism

venture, his report suggested, could be a way to provide village people with a sustainable income and so save them having to remove any more trees to the detriment of the land and its birdlife.

The supporters of this project plan to build a 5-bedroomed complex in the bush beside the Natovotovo River. A lease over 870 ha of forest has been drawn up and the retreat will be run by local people, who will receive income from it and a return from its profits.

Birdwatchers who visit will be charged a per day rate of about NZ\$70 inclusive of all meals and transfer charges. Once at the retreat they will have the opportunity to walk through vast areas of rainforest which extend from just behind where the retreat will be built.

They will also be free to swim in rivers, one of which flows by the retreat site, or on Devo Beach which is a 5-minute walk away. They will also be able to charter boats for excursions to offshore islands and to Natewa Bay.

People interested in supporting the venture and in using the retreat can either buy accommodation debentures or make an investment. An accommodation debenture, costing \$1500, would give two people 12 days at the retreat inclusive of all other charges. An investment (\$10,000 or greater) would allow a person one free bed/night for every \$500 invested per year, plus a return on any profits made. Note that the current airfare, Auckland to Savusavu is about \$1000.

For those who know nothing of this area it is suggested they read "The Vanua Levu Silktail (*Lamprolia victoriae kleinschmidti*): A preliminary look at its status and habits" by Barrie Heather, which was published in *Notornis* 24 (1977): 94-128.

This area of Fiji has vast forests. In the bush behind Devo there are at least 38 species of birds and a number of these, including the Silktail, were seen by Stuart & Alison Chambers during September 1992. The forests here are very accessible and walking is easy and pleasant, without the worry of snakes, sandflies or leaches.

When this retreat is established it will open a vast birdwatching area and provide a way to find birds which currently does not exist in the Pacific Islands, where forests are generally in private ownership and closed to interested observers. It will also give the local people an income and will prevent any further logging in this area.

If you wish to know more about this project or to invest in it please contact the organiser: Stuart Chambers, 649 River Road, Hamilton. Phone (07) 855-9939.

STUART CHAMBERS

Changes in the Checklist – 1

Recently I have been comparing the latest (1990) *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* with the previous edition and am compiling a list of the changes in bird names. The following are the changes I have recorded to the end of the seabirds.

Kiwis

Apteryx australis mantelli – North Island Kiwi, now North Island Brown Kiwi.
Apteryx australis lawryi – Stewart Island Kiwi, now Stewart Island Brown Kiwi.

Grebes

Podiceps cristatus australis – Southern Crested Grebe, now Australasian Crested Grebe.
Podiceps rufopectus – New Zealand Dabchick, now *Poliiocephalus rufopectus*.
Podiceps novaehollandiae – Australian Little Grebe, now *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae novaehollandiae* – Australasian Little Grebe.

Albatrosses & mollymawks

Diomedea exulans exulans – Wandering Albatross, now *Diomedea exulans*.
Diomedea melanophrys melanophrys – Black-browed Mollymawk, now *D. melanophrys melanophrys*.
Diomedea melanophrys impavida – New Zealand Black-browed Mollymawk, now *D. melanophrys impavida*.
Diomedea cauta cauta – White-capped (Shy) Mollymawk, now *D. cauta steadi* – New Zealand White-capped (Shy) Mollymawk.
Diomedea chlororhynchus – Yellow-nosed Mollymawk, now *D. chlororhynchus* Atlantic Yellow-nosed Mollymawk. Note also *D. carteri carteri* – Yellow-nosed Mollymawk.
Diomedea bulleri – Buller's Mollymawk, now *D. bulleri bulleri* – Southern Buller's Mollymawk and *D.*

bulleri platei – Northern Buller's Mollymawk.

Shearwaters, Diving Petrels, Fulmars, Prions, Gadfly Petrels

Puffinus pacificus cuneatus – Wedge-tailed Shearwater, now *P. pacificus chlororhynchus* note *P. pacificus pacificus*.
Puffinus gavia gavia – Fluttering Shearwater, now *P. gavia*.
Pelecanoides urinatrix urinatrix – Northern Diving Petrel, now Common Diving Petel.
Procellaria westlandica – Westland Black Petrel, now Westland Petrel.
Procellaria aequinoctialis steddi – White-chinned Petrel, now *P. aequinoctialis aequinoctialis*.
Pterodroma brevirostris – Kerguelen Petrel, now *Lugensa brevirostris*.
Pagodroma nivea – Snow Petrel, now *P. nivea nivea*. Note *P. nivea minor* – Lesser Snow Petrel.
Daption capensis capensis – Cape Pigeon, now *D. capense capense*.
Daption capensis australis – Snares Cape Pigeon, now *D. capense australe*.
Macronectes giganteus halli – Northern Giant Petrel, now *M. halli*.
Macronectes giganteus giganteus – Southern Giant Petrel, now *M. giganteus*.
Pachyptila belcheri – Narrow-billed Prion, now Thin-billed Prion.
Pachyptila desolata desolata – Antarctic Prion, now Antarctic (Kerguelen) Prion.
Pachyptila salvini salvini – Lesser Broad-billed Prion, now Salvin's Prion.
Pachyptila vittata vittata – Broad-billed Prion, now *P. vittata*.
Pterodroma hypoleuca nigripennis – Black-winged Petrel, now *P. nigripennis*.
Pterodroma hypoleuca axillaris – Chatham Island Petrel, now *P. axillaris* – Chatham Petrel.
Pterodroma externa cervicalis – Black-capped Petrel, now *P. cervicalis cervicalis* – White-naped Petrel. Note: *P. externa* – Juan Fernandez Petrel.

DOUG. BOOTH

Cuckoo calling thrush

Since 17 September 1992 we have been hearing what we assumed was a Starling imitating a Shining Cuckoo. As this call persisted daily we decided to check it out further. To our surprise a Song Thrush, in a neighbour's tall eucalyptus tree, was going through his own song interspersed every few minutes or so with the first part of a cuckoo call.

HAZEL & TOM HARTY

Common Noddy at Muriwai

Once again, Muriwai Beach has produced a rarity among the beach wrecks. In 1964, the three Perrin sisters, long-time visitors and beach walkers, were at the southern end of the beach and Pat Perrin found a Long-tailed Skua – this was subsequently identified by Dick Sibson. Now in June

1992, the same Perrin sisters (minus Pat) and myself found a Common Noddy, also near the southern end of the beach.

The bird was sent to Brian Gill, Auckland Museum, who provided the identification. Although it was decaying, the specimen still had most feathers, which were all black or dark brown, except for traces of white around the eyes and at the base of the bill, suggesting an immature bird. The bill and legs were black. The size and shape of the bill, legs and wings agreed closely with museum skins of Common Noddy – the feet and bill were more robust than those of the Lesser Noddy.

It seems amazing that more Common Noddys have not been found in New Zealand, considering that it breeds at Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands and the Kermadecs, and ranges widely over the Pacific.

JOSIE DRIESSEN

Greenshank in Hawkes Bay

Of interest in Hawkes Bay was the sighting of a Greenshank at the Ahuriri Estuary on 26 Oct. 1992. First seen by Margaret & Wayne Twydale and David Appleton, it attracted attention firstly by its solitude and then by its head bobbing behaviour, which we had only noticed previously with Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts. Its feeding habit was different too, in that it often dashed off at an angle into shallow water to grab a food item, and then ran back to where it had started. One food item was a small flounder, which it dropped in the water and made no attempt to retrieve. Once it was seen to feed in shallow water by sweeping its open bill from side to side.

On subsequent days we managed to view the bird through a telescope at distances as close as 30 m. We quickly eliminated Marsh Sandpiper, which we are familiar with. This bird had a heavier bill which was slightly upturned. The upperparts were greyish brown, with a paler head and nape. The underparts were white and the legs a yellowish green. In flight, the white V along the back was clearly seen. The tail had faint barring along its edge, which could be seen when the bird was at rest and in flight.

Our identification of the bird as a Greenshank was later confirmed by Christine McRae and Jim Hamilton, who have seen them in Australia. To our knowledge, this is the first record of a Greenshank in this area.

MARGARET & WAYNE TWYDLE

Can birds see through glass?

It is well known that birds take little or no notice of birdwatchers who are inside a car and looking through the window, or even the open window. In the literature there are

also several photographs which show the down left by owls striking a window. I have just been watching 2 female House Sparrows fluttering against a window, trying to catch a moth which was fluttering on the inside of the glass. The birds kept it up for several minutes before finally giving up. They did not seem to appreciate that there was an obstacle between them and the moth. A further point is that the moth could not see the birds either, or feel the vibration of their wings through the glass.

On the other hand, I had a Starling nest box inside a garage, with the entry under the eaves, and I was inside the garage near the window when a Starling was approaching the box quite readily without taking any notice of me. A Myna approached, but veered away as it saw me through the window. It came back a couple of times, but flew off immediately it saw me. What stopped the Starling seeing me as did the Myna?

Perhaps the birds at an acute angle to the glass do not look through as a human or Myna does, but see a reflection of some distant view.

ALAN MACDONALD

Great Knot at Port Waikato

Sunday 8 Nov. 1992 dawned overcast, but warm with a breeze off the land which was useful for taking out the few Kontiki lines along Sunset Beach which we were patrolling.

We never find many wrecks along this stretch of beach as the sand quickly covers the bodies, so our attention was soon focussed on the flock of roosting waders at the end of the sandspit. Three knots were amongst the flock of 112 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 of the knots were roosting together and the other was at the far side of the godwit flock. As we approached the birds awoke and looked up. The bills of the 2 knots being observed looked rather long, but as they both looked the same we resumed our beach patrol.

Five minutes later we were back for another look. There seemed to be too many spots on one of the knots. There was a complete band of spots around the breast, one being rather large and dark, although the other bird had very little spotting. Both birds had very streaked crowns, a feature of Great Knots, and both looked bulkier than Lesser Knots.

Luckily, after some 10 minutes the knot from the far end awoke and ran to the other two and allowed a direct comparison. There was little doubt that we were looking at 2 Great Knots and 1 Lesser Knot.

The plumage of the Great Knots was very well patterned in contrast to the Lesser Knot which had a plain, uniform plumage. Later, the birds took flight and

showed their whitish rumps and dark marks on their upper wings.

Back at Port Waikato, we telephoned David Lawrie who arrived with Tony Habraken a short while later. By this time the wader flock was feeding at the waters edge in Big Bay. The size comparison of the two knot species was even better here as the birds were feeding in close association. After being observed for another 30 minutes the knots again flew, this time over the Waikato River and out of sight.

PAM & DES AGNEW

Recent Reports

Insufficient records were received by the due date to warrant compiling a report for this issue. My thanks to those who did meet the deadline.

Please send all records for the March issue of *OSNZ news* to Derek Onley, 49 Bernera Street, c/o Post Office, Karitane, Otago by 15 February.

DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Northland

The sea was reasonably calm on 1 Nov. for our third seabird watching trip, which finally got away after two earlier attempts. The Poor Knights Islands were our destination and we passed the Sugarloaf and Pinnacles to see the Gannets on the way. Good numbers of seabirds were around and eventually we recorded 14 species during the day. Seven common dolphins escorted us for a time on the way out to the Sugarloaf and three more joined us for a short time after we left the Poor Knights for home. On the way home we also saw three whales – a female orca and two sei whales.

At our October meeting, Greg Sherley gave a talk about Riflemen and showed slides and nest boxes of various designs. Early in his study of Riflemen, Greg had to experiment with different sized holes in the nest boxes, until he found one that Riflemen could get through but not stoats.

It has been a quiet three months here this time, but that's all about to change over the summer. Happy Christmas everyone.

(Pat Miller)

South Auckland

For a change, at our September meeting Pam & Des Agnew brought along a selection of videos and we chose to look again at the Poor Knights and down to the Snares Islands. Philip Teal, of the Auckland Fish & Game Council, spoke at our October meeting. As well as learning a lot about the private lives of Bitterns we admired Phil's ingenuity in catching seven birds to be fitted with radio transmitters. In November, Tony Habraken filled in at

short notice with a splendid collection of slides from a trip some years ago to Britain, these were accompanied by a refreshing commentary.

We did not see any Galahs during a fine morning spent in the Mangatawhiri area. To find out where these birds are breeding is still a future challenge. The Hunua Kokako survey, organised by Brenda Green of the Auckland Regional Council, was blessed by a good second morning and the team, many of whom camped out, were able to verify that the birds were at least holding their own. We hope to repeat the exercise in early December. We have two Caspian Tern colonies under observation, and Tony Habraken and his team are still following up the last breeding Pied Stilts.

(Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato

As a follow up to our museum visit in July, Pam Bovill conducted a seabird workshop evening in August. After naming the parts of a bird and showing how to measure it Pam divided participants into four groups and each group worked on numbered wrecked specimens and dried bills. The use of surgical gloves gave courage to the faint-hearted and the experienced members were kept away. (They were given a separate test, but we won't go into the results of that!) All agreed that the 'hands on' experience was most valuable. However, our beaches have since thrown up few wrecks for the new 'experts' to try out their skills.

Chris Ecroyd revealed some of the mysteries of a different winged creature when he spoke in September on the interaction of bats with *Dactylanthus taylorii*. In October a further workshop about nest record cards should hopefully improve the Waikato input to that scheme. This was followed by Chris Morris' experiences in Kenya, where he identified 157 different species.

We were lucky to complete our Cattle Egret survey on a reasonably fine day – there were 217 egrets at Rangiriri, 35 at Lake Ngaroto, and 36 at Piako (the latter aren't really in our region, but we pass them frequently). By 27 Oct. the brilliantly golden Rangiriri flock had reduced to 110 birds, Piako to 29, and the paler Ngaroto birds were still all present. Local farmers and members will keep a note of diminishing numbers of egrets as summer arrives.

Members on a wet trip to Lake Whangapae were rewarded by hearing a Bittern booming. A Spotless Crane was heard at Opuatia and one was seen at Lake Ohaki.

By the end of October we had banded 15 Pied Stilt chicks, but alas only one adult. Too much rain deterred us, but not the birds which nested early in our region. By

mid-October, one flock had fledged chicks and gone from a field where we banded chicks during November in previous years.

To keep members up to date with activities in other regions we circulate regional newsletters in a folder. The newsletters are updated at each evening meeting. This is a popular idea which lessens some of the accumulation of paper in my study.

(Bev. Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

Recently, I visited a Kokako bush at Kaharoa, where rats have been poisoned, possums are scarce, and deer and goats are gone. The bush seemed so healthy with bird song and plant growth - I have visited this place every spring for 7 years and the change is breathtaking. And Kokako? Well where there used to be a pair, there now seems to be a tribe. I even saw a bit of conflict between the birds.

Paddy Latham and I checked the waders during low tide at the Maketu Estuary recently. We expected the birds to be scattered, only to find them replete and dozing in convenient groups; food must be plentiful. It was satisfying to find 2 tattlers, 3 whimbrels, a Long-billed Curlew, a Curlew Sandpiper, 15 Turnstones, and 12 Pacific Golden Plovers. Paddy was frustrated by one golden plover which greyer than usual, but because it was separated from the others it was impossible to make a comparison.

(Len Buchanan)

Hawkes Bay

Our August field trip was to Lake Tutira and White Pine Bush. A raft of 150 Australian Coot were feeding in the lake and a pair of Dabchicks were carrying out a courtship display. The day was overcast and not many birds were evident, however, Little Shag, Mallard, Kingfisher, Welcome Swallow and Scaup were among the other birds seen on or near the lake. By the time we visited White Pine Bush it was raining lightly. NZ Pigeons were present in good numbers, feeding on willow shoots. A walk around the track revealed few birds - Grey Warblers, Tuis and Silvereyes.

Mid September saw some members at Craig's Walk. There was no sign of the kowhais flowering, but the birds seen included Bellbirds, Tuis, Tomtits, Riflemen, Whiteheads, Fantails, Grey Warblers, Harrier, Blackbirds, Paradise Shelduck and NZ Pigeon.

In October a few hardy souls braved the elements of a flooded central Hawkes Bay to visit the Wanstead Lagoon, and Lakes Purimu and Hatuma. Wanstead Lagoon was a washout literally, the road was closed and there was not much to be seen from the main road. At Lake Purimu, birds seen included 6 Dabchicks, 175 Black Swans, 1 Grey Duck, 1 Black Shag, and 1 Little Shag. It was unusual to see so few

shags at the lake as breeding colonies of both species have been recorded in the area previously. We also caught a fleeting glimpse of a Spotless Crake which came out in response to a taped call. Lake Hatuma didn't reveal many birds, just a lot of water as the lake was very high.

Our wader watch this year has yielded a few surprises. A Green shank was seen in late October and was still at the Ahuriri Estuary a week later. It seems that the bulk of our waders arrived about mid October, when 33 Lesser Knots (a large number for the Ahuriri), 24 Golden Plovers, and 5 Turnstones were recorded. It seems that some of the Lesser Knots and Golden Plovers have moved on as 14 Lesser Knots and 10 Golden Plovers were the largest numbers recorded on 1 Nov.

Our planned survey of the Ngaruroro River was cancelled due to heavy rain and a flooded river. We planned to count Pied Oystercatchers, Banded Dotterels, Black-fronted Dotterels, and colonies of Black-backed Gulls on the river. This is the second year in a row that we have had to cancel this survey.

(Christine McRae)

Wanganui

At our August meeting we were given a talk by Bob Simpson about the culling of the sheep and building of a fence across Campbell Island. His talk also included information about the birds of the island and was illustrated with some excellent slides.

At our September meeting we had a video of the waders at Broome, NW Australia. This was given as an exercise in identification because many of the species shown are also found in New Zealand.

Videos also featured at our October meeting. Mick Dolling's video of the Kakas at Virginia Lake was followed by The Flying Gourmets Guide, a look at the birds which are attracted to bird tables in Britain. The latter was very interesting and showed what kind of birds can be encouraged to feed at a bird table in your garden.

In conjunction with the Department of Conservation, Tom Teasdale is doing a survey of the feeding habits of the two Kakas at Virginia Lake.

(Tom Teasdale)

Manawatu

Winter was a fairly quiet period but spring is definitely here, at least the migratory birds are back in good numbers.

In early July we had a farewell pot-luck dinner for the Guest family and then Phil Battley gave us an illustrated talk about his work in eastern USA, on Atlantic Puffins. Everyone was very sorry to see the Guests go, both Rob and Gillian had contributed such a lot of time and energy to birdwatching in New Zealand during their 19 years here. We wish them well in their new life in York, England.

Did we have three Chestnut Teal in the region this winter? Jim Moore definitely thinks so, Pam & Roger Slack are almost certain. Phil Battley saw one on 15/5; Jim Moore, Rob Guest, Jackie Carr, Pam & Roger Slack saw one, in almost full breeding plumage, on 21/6. The bird, or birds, are always with about 400 Grey Teal which use the Foxton Estuary as a haven during the duck-shooting season. Perhaps we are getting hybrids between the two species of teal?

Banded Caspian and White-fronted Terns have been noted regularly at the Foxton Estuary during the last two years. Sightings include three White-fronted Terns with different colour bands; these were banded as chicks at the Nelson Boulder Bank during the period 1981-1986. The oldest Caspian Tern to visit us was banded as a chick at Kaipara Harbour during the summer of 1978/79. The other Caspian Terns recorded were banded at Invercargill between 1987 and 1990.

The weekend of 3-4 October saw the Bell family and David Medway in residence at Foxton Estuary. Local members and visitors from Wellington spent a cold, windy time viewing the newly returned waders. Fortunately, Sunday was sunny and calm and the beaches from Tangimoana to Foxton were trodden by 10 stalwarts, including a rejuvenated Roger Wasley. Few birds were found - only three Black-backed Gulls and a few prions.

In October Isabel Castro-Udy presented a wonderful illustrated talk about securing the future of the Stitchbird. Isabel is working towards a Ph.D at Massey University which involves transferring Stitchbirds from Little Barrier Island to Kapiti Island. It was so refreshing to listen to such an enthusiast speak about their research project. Thanks Isabel.

The numbers of Cattle Egrets at Whirokino seem to have remained stable over winter. Most birds were in breeding plumage on our last visit, at the end of October, when 90 to 100 were present.

Pam & Roger Slack are continuing observations of waders at the Foxton Estuary on a weekly basis this year. Walter & Olive Chelley also visit the estuary almost daily, being residents of Foxton Beach. One observation they made was of 81 Wrybills about 13 Oct., presumably on their migration south. We have also recorded an orange-flagged Lesser Knot, seen on 27/9, but despite much searching it has not been seen since.

We have a new RR for the region. Gabor Lovei has taken on the position and we wish him well with his new task. We would like to thank Sybil Creswell for all the hours she has put in as Acting RR, for such a long period of time.

The saddest news from the Manawatu would have to be the death of Bob Creswell

on 29 July. Everyone who knew Bob will miss his youthful, adventurous spirit, his many tales, and his keen interest in all aspects of conservation and wildlife. It was a pleasure to know him.

(Pam Slack)

Wairarapa

Despite the awful weather we have managed to complete a full range of activities over recent months. The winter wader count was carried out by four brave souls who braved the rain, wind and duck-shooters. A notable feature of this survey was the fewer than usual Spur-winged Plovers. Maybe these birds had moved out to nesting sites, certainly one pair nested early this year being found incubating 4 eggs on 22 May.

Matthew Wong has been banding Harriers with 36 caught to date, one of which was recovered near Kaikoura 11 days after banding. A cat caught a Banded Rail near Boggy Pond and this is probably the first record of this species in the district since Bob Stidolph's 1927 report. Another interesting sighting has been of 4 Kakas which seem to have settled in Greytown. Only one sighting was made of Cattle Egrets this spring, with 7 near Lake Reserve, Featherston, in September.

Our evening meetings have been well supported and we have enjoyed interesting talks; Rob & Nancy Wheeldon told us about birds of prey in Idaho, Janet & Tenick-Dennison described a South African safari, Tim Harrington presented an overview of the bird life of the Wairarapa, and Brian Bell told us about the shearwater transfer project.

At one of the evening meetings we rearranged the region's management team, with Tenick Dennison stepping aside after making a wonderful contribution to the local region and Colin Scadden being elected to RR.

(Colin Scadden)

Canterbury

Well, the weather in Canterbury has improved a little, although the season is about a month late now and House Sparrows are still carrying nest material. The inclement conditions have not spoiled the quality of the birdwatching for hardier individuals, and some juicy sightings have been reported. Perhaps the most remarkable was the probable Australian Hobby chasing Rock Pigeons at Travis Swamp (Andrew Crossland), but the Arctic Tern on the Cass River delta, Lake Tekapo, and a Black-fronted Dotterel on the Ahuriri River (Richard Maloney) were also notable. One of the Pied Stilts banded by Andrew Crossland at the Linwood Canal has turned up in the Far North, despite coastal breeders supposedly being sedentary.

Good news for wader and waterfowl watchers in Canterbury was the arrival of two OSNZ telescopes for regional use. We

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following two Council members retire in May 1993 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr B.D. Heather (Editor)

Raewyn Empson (Secretary)

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28th February 1993, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1993 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1993 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1993 OSNZ Annual Conference & A.G.M. will be held in South Auckland on Saturday 15 May.

P.O. Box 12397

Wellington

Raewyn Empson

Hon. Secretary

hope that their logbooks will soon be bulging with trip and sighting reports. Perhaps now, too, more people will be able to scan the autumn flocks of passerines for Cirl Buntings, so that more can be learned about this elusive, and endangered bird.

At our September meeting, Kerry-Jane Wilson from Lincoln University talked about the conservation problems confronting marine vertebrates in New Zealand and the Southern Ocean, and of the need for baseline information about population sizes and trends; not favoured research topics in these days of immediate results and supposedly direct relevance of research, but essential nevertheless. Our speaker, on short notice, in October was Don Hadden, whose marvellous slides of birds and habitat on Tiritiri Matangi and Little Barrier Islands conveyed the magic of these northern reserves. His slides of small birds in the Big Snow of the Canterbury winter were also superb; there can be few more difficult subjects to photograph than Blackbirds in snow!

(Richard Holdaway)

Otago

We seem to be busier than ever.

Shortly, we will have completed one year of seasonal bird counts at the Okia Reserve, Otago Peninsula. We have surveyed a mixture of habitats, from a 2.5 km beach with adjacent dunes (part of the breeding grounds of the Yellow-eyed

Penguin) to small Pinus plantations and grazing land. It may not be a spectacular survey, but the information gained will be valuable when the survey is repeated in say five years.

Another seasonal count, this time of bush birds, is being carried out on the outskirts of Dunedin over a two-year period. All bush birds in two transects in the Silverstream catchment and five in exotic plantations are being counted, with good results. A few members are involved in a very frustrating Pied Stilt banding season; the birds are too late, flooded out, abandon their nesting sites for no apparent reason, or are just not interested in breeding this year. However, we haven't given up yet.

Good numbers of Royal Spoonbills are back in Otago. First arrivals at Maukiekie Island were reported to Trevor Morrison - 2 on 14 Sept., increasing to 5 the next day. The November count came up with 72 birds. George & Doreen Grant reported the first arrivals at Green Island with 3 feeding at the Kaikorai Estuary, adjacent to Green island, on 12 October. There were 8 birds the next day, all roosting on Green Island; the November count here was 25 birds.

(Peter Schweigman)

DEADLINE FOR MARCH ISSUE IS 10 FEBRUARY