



OSNZ news

No. 1 January, 1977

Edited by BARRIE HEATHER, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

. . . EDITORIAL . . .

Council, conscious, as all good councils are, of the feeling of members, has willed a newsletter into existence at its November meeting, and this is it. I hope you will find you want to read it all, and contribute to the next one. As editor I am already overwhelmed by the supply of material sent to me, even though it comes at this stage from relatively few members at short notice.

It must be realised that this is *your* newsletter, not mine. I am to edit it, not invent its contents. Its function is to keep you all informed of ornithological activity in New Zealand, of what we all have been doing and hope to do, here and abroad. Perhaps *OSNZ News* will get too big, perhaps it will fade out. This depends on you, who form the Society by your membership and, whether you are super-scientist, keen field naturalist, dabbler or merely an interested passenger in the canoe, it is what *you* would like to know about that I hope we can provide.

If you remain silent, don't make clear what you would like *OSNZ News* to contain, don't provide material, however small, and leave it all to others, then *OSNZ News* will fail. It will become yet another impersonal affair, dominated by a few willing contributors. It will not reflect your extent of interest in birds, your reason for belonging to OSNZ, and you will stop reading it.

OSNZ News is informal — there was even a thought, reluctantly abandoned, to call it *Notornis Droppings* — and cannot be quoted elsewhere, as official reporting. It does not replace publication of work and short notes in *Notornis* or the sending of proper records to the Society's various schemes. It does not replace local newsletters whose function is purely local and immediate. It should encourage, not diminish local and individual activity.

This broadsheet format, copied from other societies, is on trial. *OSNZ News* will be quarterly, sent out with *Notornis*, and therefore will in future appear in March, June, September and December (or else).

These are my present ideas on what might be included. All comments, further ideas, contributions are wanted (though not necessarily used).

1. Council news; decisions of interest to members; AGM notices and reports.
2. What members are doing; what regions are doing (plans, projects, interests).
3. Reports on outings, censuses, surveys.
4. Promotion of national schemes; interim reports on them (e.g. shag survey).
5. Birds seen of interest (not just varieties, please); behaviour of interest (don't forget the holiday sightings for next issue).
6. Requests for help with projects; things to watch out for (e.g. banded birds in certain areas).
7. Members' advertisements — maps, books, binocs wanted or for sale (think of junior members).
8. What our professionals are doing in museums, universities, Wildlife, Ecology Division, etc.
9. Requests from *Notornis* editor. Notice of forthcoming *Notornis* papers.
10. Publications — brief notice of new books, papers of interest to non-professional members, in the many local and overseas journals.
11. OSNZ library — its contents and its use encouraged.
12. Summary accounts of ornithological year in a particular area.

Where is all this material to come from for four times a year? I hope from all of you. There is no need to type offerings. Be as detailed and informal as you like. I will summarise it if necessary.

Deadline for the *March* issue will be *1st March*. Late sightings or other news may be accepted for Stop Press. Don't forget, don't leave it to others or expect me to ask personally.

Finally, I promise not to write editorials of this length again.

Notice of A.G.M.

Notice of members is drawn to the green insert with this number.

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Shag-breeding Survey

Purpose: Several studies have been made and some published on the rare species of shags throughout New Zealand but little information is available on the more common species. There are many interesting features of distribution that we know little about. Pied Shags have a very discontinuous distribution; the Little Black Shag is expanding its range (perhaps with some inflow from Australia); the Little Shag appears to disperse widely from a limited number of colonies; and the Black Shag seems to be universally distributed.

Information Required: The requirement is simple:

- (a) The location of the colony preferably given by its official name (e.g. north side Lake Waikare) and by map reference.
- (b) Number of nests and contents of these or at least a sample of them.
- (c) Date of visit.
- (d) Observer's name(s).

Points to note:

(1) If you know of a colony and cannot handle it yourself, tell your RR urgently.

(2) Many colonies will be a mixture of species and care should be taken to correctly identify nests.

(3) Black and Pied Shags tend to nest throughout the year with a peak in winter for the former and early spring for the latter. The Little and Little Black Shags appear to have more strict breeding seasons with a peak in October.

(4) Records should be sent in as gathered or at two monthly intervals commencing on 31 August 1976.

(5) Records are to be sent to BRIAN D. BELL, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.

Farewell Spit Course

Council has approved a training course for younger members of the Society at Farewell Spit. The participants have been selected by Regional Representatives for their contribution to

individual and society studies. The course is being run by Brian Bell and a group of senior members of the Society. The Wildlife Service is co-operating by providing 4 x 4 vehicles and will be sending some officers for training.

The course will be aimed at training younger members in wader identification, recording description of birds, counting birds and keeping notes. In addition a census of waders will be made and a thorough search made for less frequent visitors. It will run over the summer spring tides January 18-25.

Participants are:

Tutors: Brian Bell, Sandy Edgar, Dick Sibson, Beth Brown, John and Betty Seddon, Max Falconer.

Wildlife: Alan Hall, Pete Fisher, Andy Mardon and Andy Cox.

Participants: Mark Kennedy (Far North), Gavin Stilwell (Northland), James Douglas (Auckland), Geoffroy Arnold (Auckland), Anton Habraken (South Auckland), John Cockrem (Waikato), Tony Palliser (Volcanic Plateau), Hugh Robertson (Manawatu), Michael Dennison (Wairarapa), Simon Cook (Wellington), Colin O'Donnell (Nelson), Lynda Budgeon (Marlborough), Barry Armstrong (Canterbury), Lloyd Esler (Otago).

Caspian Tern Survey

This survey organised by Brian Bell and undertaken by Regional Representatives and other members was completed last summer. A published report will appear in 1977 but it is interesting to note that some 1,000 pairs breed in New Zealand with this species being more numerous in the north. Disturbance at the breeding colonies can reduce breeding success and some colonies have failed to produce any young for a number of years. Some colonies have been abandoned. Only a few colonies produce the bulk of the New Zealand population.

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This item, picked up from a Wildlife toilet floor, is signed by B. O. ALBERT'S-TROUSERS, which must be a nom de plume.

OLD TIMERS

The resident midwife, Taiaroa Head, wishes to advise that R-15113 (alias BW-D1), divorcee, and of origins unknown, and R-15148 (alias D44-GWG), widower of Taiaroa parish, did produce an egg and commence incubation on 15/11/76.

This announcement represents a major milestone in the history of bird study. These individuals happen to be the oldest marked birds in the world, and it is appropriate to review some of their impressive statistics.

R-15113

First recorded at Taiaroa Head in the 1937-38 season; mated to D4; first egg stoned and broken by visitors. As Royal Albatrosses do not breed until 9 or 10, this means that R-15113 is today at least 49+ years old. In 1947, D33, her first chick, was the first youngster flying from the colony to be recorded back. A further 9 chicks were subsequently produced with two mates, until she was 'divorced' by her second — a mere stripling of 20 years — in 1974.

R-15148

The fifth chick hatched at the colony (on 29/1/1941). As at 1/12/76 has reached the age of exactly 35 years, 10 months, two days. This bird fathered the first chick that flew from the colony to have a parent that had been born there. Its mate from 1950 did not return in 1974, and is presumed dead.

Throughout their combined lifespans these two old timers of the albatross world have laid or incubated 37 eggs totalling a weight of 16 kilograms, and reared 17 chicks weighing a total of 130 kilograms. While rearing those chicks, they provided approximately 3.5 tonnes of assorted foods.

During their possible combined 84 years of life they have circum-navigated the southern hemisphere some 58 times, flown an estimated 3,000,000+ nautical miles, and consumed over 300 tonnes of food.

Bird Distribution Mapping Scheme

In November 1976 the computer provided a new file of all the information collected to date. The following information is available: number of cards, observers contributing, habitats visited, species recorded and an indication of the number of birds. With the information in this form it is now possible to obtain a list of the species recorded from a particular area. Work is continuing on producing maps showing the national distribution of 100 odd species.

Although field work takes second place during this period of analysis, further records would be welcome and requests for information will be met if at all possible. P. C. BULL and P. D. GAZE, Ecology Division, D.S.I.R., P.O. Box 30466, Lower Hutt.

Fairy Terns

The questions of how many there are now in Northland, where they are still breeding and particularly where they winter, seem unresolved.

The census of Mangawhai (east coast between Waipu and Wellsford) reported in *Tara* No. 3 by SYLVIA REED recorded an encouraging 12 birds on 14/11/76. During the 17/7/76 survey

of Whangarei Harbour, including Marsden Point and Ruakaka, none were recorded but during the 12/11/76 survey 4 were recorded at Portland, well inside the harbour (Northland Newsletters, DAVID CROCKETT).

With so many Little Terns about in recent years, one wonders if the missing Fairy Terns in winter are among them or being at times overlooked. Are they distinguishable?

PADDY LATHAM, Papamoa Beach (between Tauranga and Te Puke), has seen something of the puzzling Fairy Tern that appeared at Sulphur Point, Tauranga, last summer and again this summer. A large reclamation from the harbour, adjacent to an industrial area, Sulphur Point has been adopted for breeding by Variable Oystercatchers, Banded and NZ Dotterel and many White-fronted Terns, despite constant trail bikes. This adult tern, identity definite, is apparently alone, a long way from its known modern breeding range.

Although it is aggressive and there is confusion about whether there are Fairies among the Little Terns in the harbour, there is yet no strong evidence of breeding. It was seen from November 1975 to January 1976, and was back again in October 1976. Paddy saw it on 3/10/76 when it hovered low overhead, squeaking angrily and making half-hearted dives, then lost interest and settled happily nearby. On 20/11/76 it was less aggressive as it had a bill full of fish. A nondescript Little/Fairy was fishing a few metres offshore. On 27/11/76 at high tide there were ten Little Terns. The Fairy spent some time chasing one of the others, and looking slightly larger. Later it even offered a bill-full of fish to one of them, without success.

A challenge for the January 1978 Summer Course, if not solved beforehand?

Manukau Harbour census 21/11/76

15 teams took part, in fine weather. Results summary from BETH BROWN.

White-faced Heron 330, Reef Heron 1, Caspian Tern 57, White-fronted Tern 155, Gull-billed Tern 4, Little Tern 11, SIPO 3177, Pied Stilt 878, Golden Plover 41, Turnstone 197, Bar-tailed Godwit 18,983, Knot 6152, Long-billed Curlew 3, Wrybill 33, Red-necked Stint 6, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 13, Curlew Sandpiper 7, Grey-tailed Tattler 1, Banded Dotterel 2, NZ Dotterel 30.

Firth of Thames census 28/11/76

A record group from Auckland, South Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty gave organiser BETH BROWN a headache in logistics.

White-faced Heron 203, Reef Heron 1, Caspian Tern 28, White-fronted Tern 982 (900 nesting at Miranda observatory area), Little Tern 11, SIPO 1451, Variable Oystercatcher 4, Pied Stilt 2186, Golden Plover 246 (a good flock), Turnstone 176, Bar-tailed Godwit 10,549, Knot 11,103, Long-billed Curlew 19, Asiatic Whimbrel 24, American Whimbrel 2, Wrybill 81, Red-necked Stint 9, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 1, Curlew Sandpiper 22, Banded Dotterel 3, NZ Dotterel 10, Spotted Shag 80, Rook 26, Ornithologists 70.

Waitakere surveys

Through the initiative of JEAN SKINNER a series of surveys of parts of the Waitakere Ranges, west of Auckland, has begun this year. This traditionally barren forest seems to be more worth while for birds than was thought. The methods used for the census work are not given but results of the censuses of 14 March and 5 September are in *Tara*. The unexpected strength of the Pied Tit population is especially pleasing. Jean has sent the following note.

The Waitakere Ranges appear to have been a somewhat neglected area ornithologically. Notes in *Notornis* record the occasional Pied Tit and Kaka, and in 1974 E. G. Turbott published "Waitakere Ranges: Birds." Records are very scarce; for instance, only eleven of Pied Tit between 1950 and 1972.

As a member living in the Waitakeres, I felt something should be done. First of all it was necessary to find out what species were present and to assess their status. The area comprises some 15,600 acres, obviously too big for my husband and me, although we go out on the tracks almost every weekend.

So with the permission of the RR, I organised surveys in March and September in which 30 to 40 members took part. These surveys were on tracks outside the water catchment area, whereas my own efforts have been mainly within the catchment area, with kind permission of the Auckland Regional Authority.

Pied Tits were formerly reported as "few" (Oliver) or "in small but established populations" (Fleming). This is by no means so at present. The Tit is flourishing, particularly in the catchment area. As they tend to sing and feed in tall Rimu, these birds could have been overlooked in the past.

Kakas are being recorded more often and appear to be making a comeback. Grey Warbler, Fantail, Tui, Silvereye, NZ Pigeon and Kingfisher are in good numbers.

Much of the bush is regenerating rapidly and if bird populations are in-

creasing there could be justification for introducing other native species from endangered bush.

It is hoped to continue the Waitakere surveys on a regular basis, particularly in November or December when the birds are most active.

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The Crested Grebe which appeared in Rotorua a year ago has not been seen again but there has been one on Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, since at least 28 November, 1976. First seen by JACK TAYLOR of Ward, he and JACK COWIE of Kaikoura had a good look at it on 8 December and found a nest with 2 eggs (we won't say where). Under the watchful eyes of the two Jacks, the clutch hatched successfully, and on 2 January, 1977, BARRIE HEATHER was delighted to see a Grebe with 3 half-grown young feeding on the lake. This appearance of a pair, not just a stray wanderer, and their breeding well north of their normal range, is an exciting event for Marlborough. JT has also seen Coots on the lake as well as the Australian Little Grebes from time to time.

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SHAYNE COTTER, a junior member of Petone, during a visit to Somes Island in Wellington Harbour on 28/11/76 found two nests of Reef Heron, one with two and one with three chicks. All chicks and some adults are now colour banded and Wellington members particularly are asked to watch for them.

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RAY PIERCE of Methven, now at University of Otago, is beginning an MSc on the feeding ecology of the common waders at Lake Ki-Waiono, east of Waimate, South Canterbury. This study should last through to next summer. He is at present particularly interested in the effects of changes in lake levels, in view of proposals to dam the outlet.

We congratulate Ray that his White-winged Black Tern chick has been confirmed (see *Notornis* 21 (2): 129-134, June 1974). Where have all the WWBT gone to that we used to hear so much about? There has been one at the Rangitaiki mouth, near Whakatane, in July and on 12/12/76 (ROY WESTON) but others must have been seen and be in the Class. Summ. Notes.

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In September, during a three-week stay with his son in Toronto, Canada, ROY WESTON, RR for Bay of Plenty, was impressed by a variety of spectacular birds, in particular the woodpeckers and above all the pterodactyl-like Pileated Woodpecker (18" long). Among water birds he saw American Wigeon

and Wood duck, and five Ospreys in Iroquois National Park, one diving to catch a fish in its talons.

The Cardinal, a startlingly bright red, crested finch; the Indigo Bunting, aptly named; the American Redstart, largely black with bright orange wing and tail patches. He saw one Ruby-throated Hummingbird at close quarters. It went to a bank he was sitting on, hovered for a few seconds and then "with all jets going, blasted away."

In the U.K. he saw, among other things, a lone Avocet at Minsmere and was interested to discover that Dunlins have such a pronounced downward curve to their bill.

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An unusual note in *Tara* No. 2 from mariner NEIL CHESHIRE whose vessel on 10 July was unusually close offshore from Kaipara Heads and Muriwai the day before Auckland members made a beach patrol there. He saw variously aged Wandering Albatross, adult Black-browed and sub-adult Grey-headed Mollmawks, Cape Pigeons, Grey-faced Petrels, and Prions. All but the first two species were picked up on the beach the next day or in early August.

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Kokako reports continue to come from the Rotorua district. Work-mates of RAY JACKSON, RR for the Volcanic Plateau, have recorded three seen and at least twelve heard in Rotoehu State Forest and one heard on 20/10/76 in the Mamakus. Ray regrets that so much of the latter area is being destroyed, as the population is becoming broken up into isolated pockets.

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By mid-December Red-billed Gulls at the well-known colony in the Whakarewarewa thermal area of Lake Rotorua were trying to breed but there had been no sign of the Black-billed Gulls that usually join them. Taking of their eggs has become regular (RAY JACKSON).

National Museum

We congratulate Mr J. A. (SANDY) BARTLE on his appointment since mid-July as Ornithologist to the National Museum, Wellington.

FRED KINSKY has retired but is still on the museum staff as Research Associate. He is still available for correspondence with those who wish it. Fred is at present working at an up-to-date publication on the birds of Niue, which is involving quite a lot of research into the moult cycle, migration and taxonomy of several species.

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A Tui was seen recently by ANTHEA GOODWIN of Clevedon feeding avidly

from an upturned grapefruit skin, one of a bucketful thrown out as a treat for cattle.

Mild sensation recently in the Wildlife Service when a photo taken by a trainee at Rangaunu Bay, Far North, of Royal Spoonbills was seen to show 2 Royals, a White Ibis and above all a Yellow-billed Spoonbill, with its distinctive yellow bill and legs. This is the first NZ record for a rather widespread Australian bird.

For Sale

Annotated Checklist of Birds of N.Z. B. D. Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream, has just acquired several of the OSNZ Checklist going cheap in a sale. Available from him at \$2.00 instead of usual \$5.00.

FRANK SOPER, who lives west of Takaka, has reported two Spine-tailed Swifts in the area recently, and 8 Cattle Egrets in early December at the Takaka wharf.

Nelson members have been combining with Wildlife officer KEITH OWEN to conduct a continuing survey of the Waimea Estuary for the Catchment Board. The idea is to establish a base line against which to measure the effects of pollution in years ahead. They have located the main high-tide roosts and are now working, with some difficulty, on the feeding areas. For example, where the Estuary is about a mile wide and too wide for one person, two get confused as to which portion is whose. Can anyone suggest to FRANK BOYCE a reasonable solution?

Volcanic Plateau members recently made a combined visit to Hawkes Bay to see the Kidnappers gannetry and waders on Ahuriri. They have acquired four new and promising active members, too. RAY JACKSON reports that he and M. WILCOX have found the Spotless Crane in at least three places in Whakarewarewa Forest Park and that the Robin seems to be extending its range in this Park.

TONY PALLISER, who is seldom at home in Rotorua at weekends, has found three Blue Duck in the Park and one at Rainbow Mountain, perhaps displaced from elsewhere through logging work silting up streams. Tony has found in early September 11 fresh burrows, two definitely occupied, of Grey-faced Petrel at western Ohope, near Whakatane. Tony and PADDY LATHAM between them spend a lot of time at the Bay of Plenty lagoons and estuaries. This summer promises to be interesting there for migrant waders; already in November Maketu and Kaituna lagoons have

produced nearly 400 Godwit, 8 Golden Plover, 10 Turnstone, 4 Knot, 3 Curlews, 2 Red-necked Stint, 14 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and, new to the area, 13 Curlew Sandpiper and a Siberian Tattler. Another first in October was a juvenile Rook.

Tony records 4 Wrybill at Little Waihi.

Dr CHARLES FLEMING, Wellington, reports that the resident Variable Oystercatchers of Waikanae have abandoned their three eggs; but at nearby Waimeha Lagoon a pair of Dabchick has successfully hatched chicks.

At Foxton Beach MAUREEN MOORE saw from her house a Starling visiting a soil heap from which the weeds had just been removed. A skink was caught, repeatedly beaten on the ground and stared at, finally taken away. It took three skinks in this way.

Miss MOLLIE LOGAN, of Wellington, recently back from a trip abroad, brings greetings to member and friends from JIM FOWLER, former RR for Wellington and Secretary to OSNZ. Mollie spent some time with Jim and his students trapping and banding a wide variety of passerines; she also did a bit of good Kiwi baby-sitting for him.

A note about an Oystercatcher that, while courteous, must have been hopping mad; from GRANT ALLEN, Winton, Southland.

On 1/9/76 I was cultivating a paddock on my son's farm at Hokonui, using a Rota-tiller which has four rows of tines behind which is a reel made of eight bars of angle iron travelling at high speed.

At 2 p.m. I was on the second time over and, on ground I had worked at 9 a.m. I came on a SIPO with two eggs on the ground.

It is quite impossible for an egg to have survived the machine passing over it. Only the two were laid, and successfully reared.

Also from GRANT ALLEN: On 3/9/76 one of a pair of Spur-winged Plover which had a chick a few days old was killed on the road. Two days later the surviving adult had another mate. They have been seen several times a week and have always been together.

Now (17 Nov.) the three of them are still together.

Help required - Rock Wren

PETER CHILD, 10 Royale Terrace, Alexandra, plans to collect and collate

data and observations on Rock Wren and would welcome any published material, especially on altitude and locality. He has three personal records above 7500'. Has anyone ever seen a Rock Wren in the forest, even on the fringe, or anywhere in winter?

There seems to be a good few Long-billed Curlew in the country at present. 7 wintered in Firth of Thames, with numbers rising to the census total of 19 on 28/11/76. There were 3 in the Manukau census of 21/11/76.

TONY HABRAKEN of Papakura found 18 at Jordan's roost, Kaipara Harbour on 5/12/76, and they are additional as the Firth ones have not gone (BETH BROWN).

There was one at Manawatu Estuary on 12/12/76 (HUGH ROBERTSON), and 3 are reported from Maketu, Bay of Plenty (TONY PALLISER). There were 4 at Paua, Parengarenga (J. H. SEDDON & A. T. EDGAR) in October.

There are likely to be others at such places as Ahuriri, Farewell Spit, Ellesmere, Waituna, Okarito.

The well-known aviary of Mr & Mrs S. L. LOBB, Gorge Road, Southland, has been the scene of breeding work with Saddlebacks for several years.

Mrs Lobb reports on 11/12/76 that one pair was feeding a brood of newly hatched young and a second pair was well advanced with incubation.

This is the most promising result so far, only one young having been reared previously. If good success is finally achieved, it will be the result of long and careful observation and hard work.

The top award for polluted smell and appearance must go to the Tarawera River in the Bay of Plenty. ROY WESTON has sent a couple of colour photos showing a Scaup and chick in rippling clear water, and it's the Tarawera; but well upstream above Kawerau, near Tarawera Falls.

The Black-fronted Tern is always the last of the South Island 'riverbed migrants' to breed but on 28/11/76 PETER CHILD found a small colony on a shingle stretch of the West Matukituki River (flowing from Mt Aspiring Nat. Park into Wanaka), which had begun laying the first eggs. This is a particularly late date and the latest he has recorded. There had been no recent floods.

While pottering in a boat at Wairau Bar, Blenheim, REG. COTTER saw 4

to get close to and check. ROD HAY, at University of Auckland, began to band Wrybills on the Rakaia River, Canterbury, last summer and is back on the Rakaia at present. His birds turned up in the well-known Northland haunts last winter, and it is hoped that members will keep a careful watch on Wrybills in future. I hope to have better information for the next issue.

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Members wondering what has happened to notes they sent in on Australian stragglers in 1975 are assured that they have not been lost and should be published soon. If necessary, a summary may appear in *OSNZ News* first.

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SANDY EDGAR, Kerikeri, advises that results of the Reef Heron inquiry will be written up early in 1977. Further observations are still needed. Send to A. T. Edgar, Inlet Road, Kerikeri.

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Fernbirds are among the common birds on the West Coast and thus it is natural that they should be a subject for study. A banding scheme was begun but patience wore thin and assistance dropped off. However, JO DOUGLAS has a new assistant, her cat PANTHER. Fernbirds are curious and therefore easy to catch but, being fierce fighters, Panther brings them indoors for Jo to check, band and release.

Already there is a Panther recovery of a bird banded by Jo herself the previous year half a mile away.

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60 members, mainly from Auckland/South Auckland regions, spent Labour Weekend 1976 on Coromandel Peninsula, and despite unpleasant weather, compiled a mass of notes which the organiser, BETH BROWN, will now have to sort out. The Pied Tit appeared to be increasing there as well as in the Hunuas and the Waitakeres. Kokako was recorded from several areas.

A census of Spotted Shags in Hauraki Gulf on 7/11/76 gave a total of 2588 but I do not know the exact area covered. A further Spotted Shag trip is planned for February.

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According to ROGER SUTTON, there has been a marked increase in sightings of White-backed Magpie over a wide area of Southland in the last few years. Breeding has been suspected or confirmed in several places. This is unpleasant news.

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Now that the level of Lake Wairarapa is controlled, large mud flats, particularly on the eastern side, have been created.

Observations in the last few years suggest that there may be more permanent resident groups of Godwit and Knot than in the past.

Nov./Dec. visits by HELEN COOK, MICHAEL DENNISON and SIMON COOK have interesting results for different parts of the eastern lake shore. 1st visit: 55 Bar-tailed Godwit, 8 Knot, 1 Whimbrel. 2nd visit: 30 Godwit, 8 Knot. 3rd visit: 9 Godwit, 68 Knot, 5 Turnstone. 4th visit (19 Dec.): 39 Godwit, 12 Knot, 2 Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit. A detailed description from MD makes Black-tail identity certain, including white underwing and prominent white wing-stripe.

On all visits there were over 200 Pied Stilt, many Swans, with cygnets, 3 to 7 Paradise Duck, 10 to 12 Black-tailed Gull, several Caspians.

On 19 Dec. there were over 500 Grey Teal moving ahead of the party along the shore.

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New Zealand's second recorded Australian Pelican (the other at Wanganui in 1890) was sighted by Dargaville members BARRY SEARLE and RAY FROG-GAT on 23/8/76 on the Northern Wairoa River, south of Dargaville.

According to SANDY EDGAR, it was very wary but remained until 29/8/76. It flew when disturbed on 25th by a fisherman setting a net; and again on 26th when disturbed by a boat, but both times returned to its usual low tide perch on a mudbank or a fallen tree. On 29th, when again disturbed by a boat, it flew, gaining height in wide circles for about 30 mins. till well above the patchy clouds, and was last seen heading west.

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SANDY EDGAR points out that this is apparently a good Asiatic Whimbrel year. At Paua, Parengarenga, 34 on 24 Oct., fewer on 27 Oct. (also an American Whimbrel on 24th). At Rangiputa roost, Rangaunu Bay, 23 on 25 Oct., 12 on 28 Oct. (ATE, J. H. Seddon). Sandy mentions that each year incoming birds make landfall in the far north, then move on south, but that there are surprisingly few records from other areas later in the season.

This year, though, many have been recorded so far — 24 in Firth of Thames on 28 Nov.; 1 at Sulphur Point, Tauranga (A. Palliser); 4 at Ohiwa Harbour, Bay of Plenty on 12 Dec. (Roy Weston); 1 at Lake Wairarapa on 14 Nov. (S. Cook).

It will be interesting to see where they all have got to by the end of summer.

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It seems a good Little Tern year also. 68 at Rangiputa roost, Rangaunu Bay,

on 28 Oct. (A. T. Edgar & J. H. Seddon); 11 on Manukau census on 21 Nov.; 11 on Firth of Thames census on 28 Nov. (Beth Brown); 14 on Whangarei Harbour census on 12 Nov. (David Crockett); 10 at Sulphur Pt, Tauranga, on 27 Nov. (Paddy Latham); 4 at Ohiwa Harbour, 1 at Rangitaiki mouth, 1 at Maketu (no dates) (Tony Palliser); 1 at Manawatu mouth, 30/31 Oct. and 7 Nov. (Hugh Robertson).

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HAROLD POLLOCK, well known for his TV films (life history of lyrebird, broilgas, etc.), is now living in Pukekohe, south of Auckland. He is also a sound recordist (recorder?) and played some of his tapes to a recent South Auckland meeting.

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Those who have visited the famous shellbanks at Karaka on the Manukau will not be pleased to learn that a recent storm badly damaged the banks, particularly the big No. 3 bank where two hides, including Don Urquhart's famous 'conning tower' (a 44 gal. drum welded to a large underground metal tank) were washed ashore. All the resident pairs of NZ Dotterel failed to breed on the banks, despite several tries (BETH BROWN).

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The Karaka shellbanks will probably rebuild eventually but the problem on the Oreti Estuary near Invercargill is much more serious. The Woodend shellbanks much beloved of migrant waders and the site of the important Caspian Tern colony have succumbed since 1973 to weed growth and the surrounding mudflats are overgrown with the Spartina grass that has become the curse of that estuary.

A new, low shellbank has appeared nearby, where the Caspians (some 70-80 pairs) have tried to breed, successfully on the second attempt in 1974, with complete failure after three attempts in 1975. This year, banding work is being continued by MAIDA BARLOW (for photo, see *Notornis* 19 (3): 214) and we shall hope for a better season this time.

Society Tie

An order has been placed for 12 dozen ties for the Society. The emblem will be the Takahe (*Notornis*) in blue, red and green and outlined with a gold thread. They will appear in rows across the tie as is the case in most ornithological ties. The tie will be a mid-grey weave which we hope will be suitable for use with most suits and jackets. It is hoped the ties will be available for the next Annual Meeting. Expected cost will be about \$5.00.

Publications

Eventually I hope to have a panel who will keep us aware of all papers and new books likely to interest general members. Meanwhile the list will be scrappy. * = in OSNZ Library.

**Migratory patterns of Ruddy Turnstones in the Central Pacific Region*, by Max C. Thompson. *The Living Bird* 1973. (Cornell University) p. 5-23. Banding of 16,152 Turnstone by Smithsonian on passage through Pribilof Is, Alaska, using cannon nets. Results suggest circular Pacific migration.

The birds of Great Mercury Island, by Anne Grace. *Tane* vol. 22 1976: 65-69 (*Journal of Auckland Univ. Field Club*). List and comments by 9 members of trip May 1975.

Records of birds from the Leigh district, by F. J. Taylor, Marine Research Lab., Leigh. *Tane* vol. 22 1976: 163-172. List with comments on 90 species noted 1966-1975 around Leigh.

A checklist of the birds of the world, by Edward S. Gruson. Collins, 1976. xii + 212 pages. Straight lists, without comment, of genera and species; not necessarily correct; useful only for the globe-trotting 'lister and ticker.'

**Breeding biology of the Grey-faced Petrel*, by M. J. Imber. *Ibis* 118 (1) Jan. 1976: 51-64. 1969-71 study on Whale Island, Bay of Plenty. Courtship to chick rearing, with discussion on significance of winter breeding.

**Habitats of the land-birds of Viti Levu, Fiji Is*, by Martyn L. Gorman. *Ibis* 117 (2) April 1975: 152-161. Useful addition to distribution data; a fairly superficial listing of species in 18 varied habitats sampled between 1970-1973.

New Zealand Birds, by M. F. Soper. 2nd edition 1976. Whitcoulls. 2 new chapters on birds of Chathams and Subantarctic is., plus a bit on migratory waders. 35 extra pages and some new plates for double the old price (now \$20.00).

Birds and birdsongs of New Zealand, by Gordon R. Williams. Reed 1976, \$2.50. Largely the texts that accompanied the Kiwi records. 109 pp. We seem overloaded with books of this type now.

Annual Report of Southland Acclimatisation Society 1976. Always contains good wildlife reading. p. 60-61 report on breeding of Hoary-headed Grebes. p. 61-68 valuable report on wildlife and fisheries value of Waituna Wetland Reserve, including full list with comments on the 69 bird species recorded there. p. 72-79 summary of reports and information, including those of OSNZ members Roger Sutton and Maida Barlow, given to Invercargill estuary tech-

nical advisory committee; final recommendations of the committee.

Wildlife — a review, ed. P. Morrison. No. 1 1976. Wildlife Service, Dept. Internal Affairs. 64 pp. Contains inter alia some clear statements of current progress with research on Kaikoura and Chathams robins, effects of red deer on takahe, kakapo on Maud I., Shore Plover, Campbell I. Teal, the mysterious taiko petrel of the Chathams, Paradise Duck. Well worth having.

In search of birds in New Zealand, by Ross McKenzie. Reed 1972. Members may not be aware that this book, which continues to be popular among our members on holiday and among visitors, is now out of print and will not be reprinted. Ross, who is willing to make all the revisions needed to be up to date, and to sacrifice quality and royalties to keep it going, has failed to raise interest with publishers.

Members are advised to watch for copies still in smaller shops, either buy them or let me know where they are, and we can advertise them in *OSNZ News*, or act as agent for members or friends wanting the book. OSNZ Libray should have copies, if we have a donor (Ed.).

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OSNZ Library

Did you know OSNZ ran a library for its members? Have you a catalogue of its contents? (70 pages for 50 cents, from Mrs J. F. Skinner, P.O. Box 60-083, Titirangi, Auckland 7.) Have you ever used this library?

The Library receives on exchange for *Notornis* 64 journals and newsletters from similar societies in New Zealand and overseas. They are for members to use, not for professionals only, who anyway often have their own sources for these journals.

The Library has a large number of general ornithological books that have been donated or sent for review over the years (further donations of books from members will be welcome). From the catalogue you can choose a steady supply of reading to try out.

For instance, if you haven't read the works of Guthrie-Smith or of L. E. Richdale, or Bent's life histories of North American birds, they are there, although the Library does have many gaps.

Junior members, who are unlikely to have a wide book collection, can benefit from OSNZ Library.

Get the catalogue, then make requests from Hon. Librarian, Miss A. J. Goodwin, R.D. 1, Clevedon.

ROB GUEST, RR for Canterbury, has sent this interesting report.

BUSH BIRD SURVEY OF BANKS PENINSULA

During Labour Weekend, 1976, members of Canterbury region searched many of the remnant patches of bush on the Peninsula for native bush birds. All major patches were covered and many smaller ones. Areas of manuka were also looked at.

WILF MAWSON, FRANK HOLLAY and ENFYS GRAHAM organised the camp at Duvauchelle smoothly.

The most disturbing factor noted was the continued degradation of the bush, in scenic reserves and private property alike. Browsing by possums and domestic stock was very noticeable, while burning was continuing in some areas.

Brown Creepers were surprisingly common over the whole area, in both bush and scrub; probably several hundred on the Peninsula. Bellbirds and Grey Warblers were in nearly all remnants inspected, while Fantails were abundant in lower areas.

Rifleman distribution was very patchy. Three pockets were located where they had a vigorous population, inhabiting bush, scrub, hedgerows and gardens.

Pied Tits were entirely confined to the high level patches of bush around the Summit Road. Numbers not impressive — perhaps 100-200 on the Peninsula. The NZ Pigeon were throughout in small numbers, not only in bush areas, the young shoots of willow providing much of their food at this time.

The Tui was surprisingly uncommon, reports being confined to the lower valley areas and perhaps less than 20 pairs.

This weekend stimulated much discussion and thought about future work on the Peninsula, in particular over the status of the very rare Robin and Morepork.

(Compare *Notornis* 3 (6): 141-146. Bird life at Governor's Bay by Elliot Dawson & Ian Cresswell, July 1949.)

MALAYSIAN & AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE TOUR 1977

An "off the beaten track" tour of 23 days visiting east and west coasts of Malaya and across the Central Highlands is being arranged for Easter 1977, plus a 5-day stop-over in Perth, W.A. Persons with an interest in orchids and flora and fauna generally will find this trip of particular worth. The cost is approximately \$865 which includes air and coach fares and accommodation on twin-share basis.

For details write to COLIN SEARLE, P.O. Box 2577, Auckland, C.1.

Royal Spoonbills on 8/12/76. LIONEL LOBB, Gorge Road, Southland, recorded 10 at Fortrose estuary on 28/11/76; a fairly regular occurrence at Fortrose.

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FRANK BOYCE, Nelson, has recently learned that Pukekos are right or left-handed. Any comments from others?

A secret addict

Mr E. G. JANSEN, Waikanae, reports: I picked up a thrush's nest which had been blown out of a tree. Imbedded in the mud of the nest's inner lining there were eleven cigarette butts. The mud had been smeared over them, so that none of them were protruding.

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During the Auckland Anniversary Weekend, 28-31 January, the Far North/Northland region is planning a survey of the Aupori Peninsula from Kaitiā northwards. They aim to survey sand dune lakes, beaches, wader roosts and check rumours of strange birds. We look forward to hearing how they get on.

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A South Island Pied Oystercatcher colour-banded by BARRIE HEATHER on the Oreti River north of Winton, Southland, has been seen alive by D. P. MURRAY of Wildlife Service, Hokitika, on a sea beach in Westland. The bird was banded as a chick on 7/10/61 and is thus 15 years old, so far.

Spur-winged Plover

The excitement of recording the spread of the Spurwing in the South Island has now largely subsided. Instead it has become a North Island activity. The competition between Manawatu and Wairarapa for first solid bridgehead was won by Manawatu, and the birds are now frequently seen particularly in the Foxton area.

The pair that set up first at Paekakariki has been fairly closely watched and is still going. Perhaps we'll hear about them soon.

In the south Wairarapa, DAVE SIM of Pirinoa has kept a fairly close eye on the beginnings of colonising there, in the delta area between Lakes Wairarapa and Onoke. The first was on the Manganui River delta on 15/1/75, with Stilts. Careful searching revealed no more until on 24/4/75 one was with two Glossy Ibis at the mouth of the Turanganui River. No more until one was seen on 15/8/75 on the Ruamahanga River east of Lake Wairarapa. This bird was colour banded and had come from Paekakariki, where it had been banded as a chick the previous year by Max Falconer and Barrie Heather.

That was all until mid-June 1976

when five Spurwings were reported to HELEN COOK by a farmer, but Dave did not find them until on 27/6/76 he found two back at the Manganui. These two had a nest with 4 eggs on the delta on 21/7/76, and there was a second pair 2 km upstream. On 9/8/76 there were still 4 eggs but cattle were giving trouble; on the 13th the site was badly trampled and there was only one egg. On 16/8/76 the last egg was found broken and no young were raised.

On 19/8/76 Dave found the 4 eggs of the second pair in a paddock beside the river. On 9 and 17/9/76 they had three chicks. His next visit was a quick one on 25/10/76 when three birds were flying overhead.

Since then Helen Cook has seen five birds in a field a mile out of Featherston, on 4/12/76. Once the Spurwing becomes established it should flourish in the Wairarapa habitat, in many ways so like its original Southland.

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A New Zealand Dotterel with Banded Dotterels was a rare sight on the Wairarapa coast. Seen by DAVE SIM at Te Humenga Point on the eastern shore of Palliser Bay on 6 and 21/11/76.

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South Island Spurwings don't yet have it all their own way. A pair chose the site of the new high school in Kaikoura and laid one egg but after a week they had given up after pressure from hawks, dogs and children (JACK COWIE).

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The breeding of the Black-billed Gull in the North Island took a new turn in 1976 when a colony began in Pahiatua, northern Wairarapa. REG. COTTER, Petone, heard from his cousin in Pahiatua that, while fishing, he had been aware of gulls for two or three years on the Mangatainoka River above the town bridge. This year, Reg, his son SHAYNE and MAX FALCONER went to see for themselves early in October but found none. On the 15th, however, Reg and Shayne saw over 200 gulls wheeling over the Pahiatua sewage ponds.

On 16/10/76 Shayne found 41 birds, 17 nests with 26 eggs (total) in the overflow sewage pond. The missing birds from the 200 may be on one of several suitable nearby rivers.

L. GURR found in early December that the colony was deserted, and only 3 walking young were to be seen. These were nearly fledged and attended by their parents.

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Recently SIMON COOK, of Featherston, had an awesome experience. As he rode on his bike over a ridge on the northern shore of Lake Wairarapa,

over 500 Swallows rose from the beach in front of him in a great swirling cloud.

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A far cry from the estuaries of Christchurch — would you believe a SIPO feeding on an alpine snowfield?

On 21/11/76, PETER and MARGARET CHILD watched a SIPO walking across an extensive snowfield on the Old Man Range at c. 5400', evidently gleaning immobilised insects which are common on these surfaces in summer. There were no particularly large ones, such as grasshoppers, which are found later in the season. The largest were crane flies and small black ground beetles.

It wouldn't surprise Peter if Pipits and Banded Dotterel also use this food source on the block mountains of Central Otago.

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In the early morning of 2/10/76 ANTHEA GOODWIN, Clevedon, found the freshly picked remains of a NZ Pigeon on the grass c.30 metres from the bush. Ross McKenzie tells her he has seen pigeons on Little Barrier feeding on clover, so that it is likely that it was killed while feeding on the pasture. 16 Pigeonwood and 5 Taraira berries lay undigested from its crop.

Marked Wildfowl

Black Swans have been marked this year with neck bands, coloured as to regions — Hawkes Bay, Rotorua, Wairarapa, Farewell Spit and Lake Ellesmere.

Shoveler, Mallard and Grey Teal (and some Brown Teal in Northland) have been marked with coloured nasal saddles.

Members are asked to watch carefully for these coloured necks and beaks, as these birds may wander very widely.

Report results to Murray Williams, Wildlife Service, Dept. Internal Affairs, Wellington.

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The banding of Shoveler by staff of the Southland Acclimatisation Society (Annual Report 1976: 30-31) continues to confirm the considerable mobility of Shoveler.

The most spectacular recovery was of a bird banded as a flightless adult male on 29/1/73 in the Waituna Reserve, coastal Southland, and shot almost 1000 miles away at Kaitiā on 1/5/76. This extreme mobility shows that the management of Shoveler habitat must be on a national plan (ROGER SUTTON).

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The Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit does not feature prominently in records so far

this summer. In early December, SANDY BARTLE turned up one on Enderby Island, in the Auckland Is, and two have been sighted at Lake Wairarapa by SIMON COOK and MIKE DENNISON.

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One of the more fascinating breeding colonies on the West Coast, according to JO DOUGLAS, is that of Black-backed Gulls situated amid the Miller-ton Burning Mine. It is fairly safe from the major smoke vents north, south and east, but smuggles right up to the western vent; ten nests *within* 20 feet.

The mine burns mostly underground over a huge area, continually expanding. Fumes seep up through cracks to kill the surface vegetation. Rains then skin off the topsoil. The colony is surrounded by acres of sterile bare rock with odd patches of slow regeneration and others of newly dying scrub. A desolate scene. However the colony itself nestles in pasture grasses, perhaps brought up by the gulls and nurtured in their droppings. It is a healthy colony of 60 successful nests.

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On 17/8/76 FRANK BOYCE recorded at his Nelson bird table a "50% partial albino male Chaffinch." By this he means that, whereas all colours were present in the plumage, they were about half the usual intensity. The plumage had a washed out, well laundered look. He has been told that this is due to the 'Isabeline factor.' Can anyone give him a reference or explanation for this?

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ARCHIE BLACKBURN reports that almost continuous rain during Sept., Oct. and Nov. in the Gisborne district delayed the nesting of Fantails by several weeks, and seems to have affected fledging also.

The first clutch of a pair under observation was due to fledge on 31/10/76. The nest was well sheltered by leaves of a Kawakawa shrub. Rain was heavy and almost continuous around this date and the young remained in the nest five days longer than the usual fifteen. There were still heavy showers on the day of fledging but the young were so well developed, as shown by length of tail and activity in flight, that all three survived to independence.

Within four days the female completed a second nest in the shelter of a broad Whau leaf and some five feet from the first nest, and on 15/12/76 a second family was well on the way to fledging.

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During Labour Weekend (22-25 Oct.), 28 Northland/Far North members made a study of Motukawanui, the main island

of the Cavalli group, north of the Bay of Islands. We anticipate hearing of their findings, particularly the status of the Cavalli Bellbirds after many years of farming on the island.

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A large colony of Black-billed Gulls has settled into the Charwell River this year (flows into the Conway, south of Kaikoura). This is an unusual site, nine miles from the sea over hills 2000-3000' high. Rather more surprising was a small group of Red-billed Gulls nesting with them, among which Dr JIM MILLS captured a pair previously colour-banded at the Kaikoura colony (JACK COWIE).

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We welcome into existence in 1976 the MASSEY BIRD GROUP, a debonair bunch of students who, under the benevolent eyes of LINDSAY DAVIES, RR for Manawatu, and SYBIL QUIN, and spearheaded by HUGH ROBERTSON and MICHAEL DENNISON, are setting about the Manawatu with daring efficiency.

The Group has begun a survey of the smaller lakes, ponds and general wetlands, starting with the coastal area. Circulars to farmers have had a good response and since March they have examined ten lakes thoroughly and made first visits to several other sites. They are doing their share with beach patrols and the shag survey. The Black-fronted Dotterel is one of their interests, particularly its winter habits.

The Manawatu River at Foxton has been visited 17 times through the year. Here they have been concentrating more on the southern side and have erected permanent (under-mud) hides. This is neatly complementing the work of JIM and MAUREEN MOORE of Lower Hutt in keeping the estuary more closely watched than ever.

As an independent party, the Group was able to make effective submissions to the River Users' Committee on the importance of the estuary, resulting in a restriction of 5 mph for speedboats passing through the Spoonbill area.

Some interesting patterns of wader, tern and gull movement should emerge soon from this combined work, for the Manawatu is a small but widely varied habitat, a micro-Miranda. The year's list shows this — Godwit, Knot, Curlew (2), Wrybill, Sharp-tailed, Pectoral, Curlew and Terek Sandpipers, possibly Baird's, Golden Plover, Turnstone, Spurwing, Little Egret, Glossy Ibis and the inevitable Little Tern (last seen 19 April; back in October). This is the Royal Spoonbill non-breeding centre, of course; peaks of 52 and 47 in March, but 20-30 over winter.

The latest to hand is 7 Spoonbill with breeding plumes and a White Ibis, on 12/12/76 (all from Australia?).

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Northland/Far North region plans to survey the dune lakes of the Pouto Peninsula to North Kaipara Head in February.

As David Crockett says in his newsletter, the status of the Dabchick in Northland is long overdue for review. The same could be said for the whole country, particularly as the Australian Little Grebe and the Hoary-headed Grebe are now being seen and the Coot is spreading. Future effects cannot be assessed well if we do not know the present situation.

Dune lakes are a favourite Dabchick habitat. The recent fashion among rural borough councils for sewage settlement ponds has added habitat, especially in autumn and winter, and in ponds where rank weed grows over the concrete splash strips. The best so far that I know of is the 25 to 40 Dabchicks on one of the Masterton Borough ponds in March-April 1973 (BARRIE HEATHER and BOB STIDOLPH).

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A note from ROGER SUTTON, RR for Southland tells us that the pair of Hoary-headed Grebes, the first for New Zealand, which reared one young last season was incubating four eggs on 11/12/76.

A film to see

The National Film Unit has just completed its latest in the Nature Series, about Pied and Black Stilts. Roger Sutton, who has had a preview, says it is the best yet. Members should watch out for the official release of this film.

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ARCHIE BLACKBURN reports: A Rockhopper Penguin, in perfect condition, came ashore at Okitu, 4 km north of Gisborne, in the early evening of 6/12/76. It seemed to be much attracted by a picnic party's rock music; perhaps this contained some familiar trumpeting, yells and grunts!

It was completely unafraid, its only protest at handling being a quite gentle nibbling of the fingers. I brought it home overnight for safety from prowling dogs; at a call it would follow me about like a puppy. It was set free at an isolated spot next morning, hopefully to find its way south.

This is probably by far the most northerly record of this species.

Colour-banded Wrybills

At last someone is colour-banding Wrybills, surely the easiest of NZ waders