



OSNZ news

No. 9 December, 1978

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 2/362 Hereford Street, Christchurch, for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

NOTE: Deadline for March 1979 issue will be 28 February.

Mapping Scheme

The Society's Provisional Atlas of Bird Distribution shows that although much has been achieved, many squares remain inadequately surveyed (see Maps 13 and 14 in the Atlas). To correct this, Council has asked for an all-out effort to improve coverage before the end of 1979 when the scheme will have been in operation a full ten years. The scheme is unlikely to continue in its present form much beyond the end of 1979 (see *Notornis* 25: 242).

Thus it is now or never if we are to collect enough new data to justify the publication of a Definitive Atlas in the early 1980's. We have one year, and one year only, to fill those blank squares, and to revisit squares that are poorly covered. Please try to cover as many habitats as possible in each square and to secure records of breeding.

Cards are available from your local RR (listed inside the back cover of *Notornis*) or direct from Peter Gaze, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Nelson. Instructions for completing the cards are given on pages 240 to 247 of the Provisional Atlas and, if required, xeroxed copies of the instructions can be obtained from Peter Gaze.

It is important that, wherever possible, completed cards be sent to your RR who, after noting and checking, will forward them to Peter Gaze for storage and subsequent coding for the computer. RRs, by virtue of their local knowledge, are often well placed to spot records which may require checking while events are still fresh in people's minds. Equally important, if the RR sees all new cards, he or she is in a much better position to advise other observers as to which squares are relatively well covered and which are not.

The motto for all observers, and for RRs, should be 'do it now.' If cards don't reach RRs promptly, the latter

cannot give accurate information on which squares remain unvisited, and if RRs 'file' cards, instead of sending them promptly to Peter Gaze, someone's painstaking field work may never reach the atlas. Occasional cards still arrive at headquarters two or three years after they were compiled. Data from such cards were, of course, not available for the Provisional Atlas, and cards received after December 1979 may not get into the Definitive Atlas, though they would be used in any subsequent edition/revision.

Any queries about the scheme which cannot be answered by RRs should be directed to Peter Bull, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Lower Hutt. (PETER BULL)

Southland/Otago flooding, October 1978

Readers may remember the report about the extensive flooding that affected Southland in late October 1977 (*OSNZ News* 5). ROGER SUTTON has sent this report about this year's disaster:

A study of the history of flooding in Southland indicates that floods may occur in any month and that they are likely to come in cycles. Recent events have made their mark on the province and the tax-payer's pocket. There have been four major floods in the past 17 months, two of these were ten-year class floods, one was in the 25-year class and the latest one in the 100-year class, particularly in the Maitai Valley.

What effect this latest disastrous flood has had on bird life can be only surmised. Observations about home and garden indicate that many eggs and young of tree nesting species were lost. These observations are supported by a noticeable absence of newly fledged birds since the floods, however re-nesting is occurring.

Ground nesting birds on high ground appeared largely unaffected, but in the main flood beds of almost all rivers and streams there was total loss. In the October 1977 flood 95,000 pairs of Black-billed Gulls' nests were lost over-

night. Something very similar has happened again this year. Spur-winged Plovers, SIPOs and Skylarks were seen hovering in distress over rising flood waters. Pukeko, crakes, waterfowl and Harriers will have suffered heavily also, as they did in 1977.

As usual, Black Swans were quick to take advantage of freshly flooded areas and Lionel Lobb reported numerous Song Thrushes feeding vigorously among logs as they floated down the lower Maitai River.

Post-flood observations of waterfowl show poor and widely scattered broods of young in the main flood plains. Mated pairs of Mallards are prominent as they were in early September, and the usual bachelor groups of Mallards seem to have broken up rather than increased. At least one pair of Spur-winged Plovers had re-nested and were incubating within a week in an area which had been nearly two metres under water. A freshly-dead banded Spur-winged Plover was found in flood debris; it had been banded as an adult in the same area 11 years previously.

Jeanne and Lionel Lobb were Southland members of OSNZ who really had to cope with the full force of the flood. Their farm is adjacent to the tidal zone of the Maitai River, with a river frontage of about 10 km. Flood water entered parts of their home and was a metre deep in their extensive aviaries. Luckily only one of their valuable collection of birds was lost, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for their stock. In spite of all this the Lobb's remain cheerful.

In the aftermath of the floods in Otago comes this cheering report from PETER CHILD:

After the disastrous floods in the Clutha catchment we were concerned to know the fate of the few colonising Wrybills on the Matukituki and Makarora riverbeds (first reported in these areas by me in 1969 and 1972 respectively).

At the end of October we walked the main shingle stretches of these river-

beds during the course of re-examining the map squares where they lie. We were pleased to record ten Wrybills and one nest on the Matukituki (in two days), and four birds and two nests in three hours of sandstorm conditions on the Makarora. All nests had the normal clutch of two and probably all were second attempts since riverbed nests of every species were destroyed by the floods. Thus it seems that the Wrybill is attached firmly to this Otago habitat.

IOC West Berlin

Five members from New Zealand attended the gathering of 700-odd professionals and amateurs at the International Ornithological Congress in West Berlin from 4 to 11 June 1978. Travelling some 12 000 miles for a week of concentrated ornithology might be expected to bring one to near exhaustion, with plenary sessions, 38 symposia, 22 special interest groups, over 100 poster presentations, 60-70 films as well as excursions, it could have been a little overwhelming. But with first class organisation and a cheerful welcome, a happy and relaxed atmosphere prevailed. The 'Kongresshalle,' a striking modern building with every facility, set in the spacious surroundings of the 'Tiergarten' with its trees, shrubs, lawns and fountains, could not fail to impress.

Two overall impressions: firstly, emphasis on conservation of habitat; secondly a feeling of greater respect for birds as beings, research revealing more and more of their sensitivities, variations and adaptations. Experience of the Canberra Congress in 1974 helped in choosing which parts of the varied programme to attend; of necessity this report has a personal bias.

Plenary sessions were held in the ample auditorium where on either side of the stage were hung large photographs of those two pioneers of modern ornithology, Oskar Heinroth and Erwin Stresemann. Konrad Lorenz gave the Oskar Heinroth Memorial Lecture, describing and paying tribute to his great work.

A symposium on Pesticides and Wildlife in the Third World revealed some disturbing facts. Though it is difficult to get statistics on the production and distribution of DDT, DDE and their derivatives, at least 100 million kg. of DDT are produced annually. The biggest users are Brazil, Pakistan and Egypt, especially where cotton is cultivated. The greatest danger is to raporial and fish-eating birds. Tsetse fly control in Nigeria by bush destruction, spraying with DDT from ground and air has caused acute mortality in insectivorous

birds. Pyrethroid sprays, to which the tsetse fly has not yet developed resistance, cost more but show no damage to birds. Anopheles mosquitos show increasing resistance to all insecticides, hence their is a resurgence of malaria.

Another symposium on the Scientific Basis of Conservation stressed how ornithologists should be very concerned and involved. In countries such as Canada, U.S.A., Belgium and Britain ornithologists are justly so. There is a general feeling that far more should be done to acquire and protect habitats. The rate of species extinction is increasing and is likely to continue to do so. Provision of artificial nest sites should be encouraged; in various countries I saw nest boxes erected by local parks authorities. There is a need to take some sort of gamble and experiment *before* the acute danger of extinction arises.

A plenary session by William Keeton (U.S.A.) on Avian Orientation and Navigation showed the bird's sensitivity to magnetism, gravitation, barometric pressure, infra-sound, solar polarisation, ultra-violet light and olfaction. All these factors have a bearing on navigation and are very finely adjusted; much has yet to be discovered.

In a symposium on Urbanisation, Stanley Cramp showed how W. H. Hudson's gloomy predictions as to loss of species in Inner London have not come about. In fact, quite the contrary, as the number of breeding species has increased, 12 new species since 1950 and only four losses. The main reasons are a change to a more favourable attitude among the general public, better legal protection, the provision of sanctuaries, especially areas of water, reduced air pollution and the cleaning-up of the Thames.

Two Special Interest Groups — an innovation to the programme — which I attended were most rewarding and interesting. These were 1) International Co-operation in the Collection and Exchange of Bird Sound Recordings and 2) Historical Collections in Museums. The convenors made the proceedings delightfully informal, a kind of round table discussion in which everybody had their say and could fire questions at anyone else. The system by which BLOWS (British Library of Wildlife Sounds) operates was explained with illustrations, difficulties of cataloguing were discussed and suggestions made; some seemed unnecessarily complicated. The need for making known the existence of sound libraries was very apparent. Sound recording in Britain is not easy, as I later discovered, because

of the all-pervading extraneous noises of aircraft, machinery, road and rail traffic or just people. It is a strange fact that the greater the noise, the louder the bird sings. This does not seem to apply in New Zealand. Perhaps our birds have not felt the need to compete!

The second subject brought together 20-30 curators discussing how best to provide interchange of lists and skins. To museum workers, the lack of information concerning many collectors and specimens, especially those of the 19th century, is universally frustrating. It was a little surprising to learn that U.S. museums are so hedged with red tape for loans overseas that they have practically given up dealing with them. Computerisation was considered of dubious value—a well curated collection had no need of it.

Poster presentations were another innovation to the programme. They were on show all the time so it was possible to digest a few at a time in meal breaks or spare time. Of particular interest to us in the southern hemisphere was John Croxall's presentation of the difference in feeding patterns between the young of Black-browed and Grey-headed Mollymawks on South Georgia.

During an afternoon coffee break one day I chatted with two Japanese members, Mr. Yoshi and Miss Oka. The former is trapping and banding waders, species to date included: Wandering Tattler, Japanese Snipe, Dunlin, Turnstone and a few Bar-tailed Godwit. There has been about a 5% recovery, most of them at the place where banded. Miss Oka is working on beach wrecks of Short-tailed and Streaked Shearwaters and has found a method of distinguishing between immature and adult specimens by the structure of the culmen.

The film sessions were good, those seen included 'Devil Birds,' based on David Lack's 'Swifts in a Tower'; 'The Arctic Islands, an endangered habitat'; 'Tierra del Fuego'; and nearer home, 'Rottnest Winter' and our own 'Extinction.' Sixteen of the listed films were BBC, three ABC and four from CBC. As far as is known only one of the BBC films has been screened on New Zealand TV. Why are we so deprived?

As a diversion, on the Friday evening a performance of historic dances was staged by students of the Art School and the Instrumental College of Berlin. This was sheer delight to eye and ear, the dancing was executed with tremendous verve and finish, obviously greatly enjoyed by performers and audience alike.

One day of the week was given to excursions, although every day early

morning visits to the Zoo and walks in the 'Tiergarten' were organised. The Germans believe in early starts — 7 a.m.! There is a surprising number of species in the Tiergarten; the Zoo is spacious and attractive with large aviaries containing many exotic species including familiar friends such as Blue Duck and Weka. On Thursday we made a 3.30 a.m. start for the Botanical Gardens, a magnificent area of 98 acres with plants from all over the world grouped according to place of origin. A local guide was able to point out 20-30 species of birds; memorable was a juvenile Tawny Owl which obligingly stayed put for all to see. Thence to Grunewald Forest and Lakes where a further 15 species were noted. In the afternoon we visited Pfaueninsel, an island in the River Havel; rather too popular with the general public for satisfactory birdwatching, though a considerable variety of species were seen and heard.

The Congress closed on Sunday evening with a 'slap-up' dinner in one of the large and expensive hotels (everything in Berlin is expensive) but I left for U.K. in the morning, satiated but by no means exhausted, feeling very happy I attended and possibly somewhat affected by Congress fever. The next is to be held in Moscow in 1982. (SYLVIA REED)

The Wash Waders Ringing Group

NORA FINN was another OSNZ member to attend the IOC Congress; afterwards she spent some time in the U.K. and has sent in this interesting report about wader ringing (birds are ringed in Britain and banded in N.Z.).

On Friday 23 June Sylvia Reed met me at the Liverpool Street Station. We boarded a train for Norwich where Tony Wilkins met us at the station. According to the ringing date list the group would be at Terrington. We collected some food and set off in Tony's tiny car, skirting Kings Lynn to arrive in the area of Terrington Marsh. After some difficulty we found the group finally in an old disused house on the Sandringham Estate. We were cold, tired and hungry and after being given instructions for the early morning 'catch' we found ourselves a room with mattresses and slept.

At 4 a.m. we were called. The main group departed early, giving us instructions on where to follow. In the early wet morning light we found the cars and climbed over the earthen wall to find activity in full force.

The three cannon-fired nets were in

position on the tufts of raised ground where the waders had their high tide roost. Grass gathered from near the cars was used to cover the nets. When all was set for action we moved off in a body to the other side of the wall, leaving a person behind in a hide to man the battery-fired charges. The rest lay on their stomachs viewing the area through binoculars.

As the waders came in, settled and roosted the word was given to 'fire.' Not much noise but a lot of confusion in the nets and everyone rushed over. The pace was on and the whole operation went smoothly. Birds of the same species were placed in sacking bags; the total catch was 44 birds, 27 Bar-tailed Godwits, 15 Black-bellied Plovers and 2 Dunlins. The Knots escaped, or rather they were not in the net range and unfortunately only one set of cannon had fired. Someone was detailed to collect the nets, etc. Meanwhile the captured birds were placed in coops of sacking and allowed to dry out. Gear was prepared while the birds were drying out and soon all was ready. The weighing and processing group sat alongside one another and once a bird was ringed it was taken to be weighed and measured and have its moult assessed. When released most birds took off on a low flight and were soon out of sight, while a few with cramp walked or staggered away.

Clearing up was smart and slick. Back at the house a group had been instructed to get breakfast on the way and we were soon tucking into porridge, bacon and eggs and sausages. There were no idle loafers. All nets were dried out and rolled up ready for the night catch (Oystercatchers) at Terrington. Cartridges were re-charged and all equipment checked over. The night catch failed due to a pair of Oystercatchers with chicks.

Sunday morning we were up again at 4 a.m. The nets were laid but the birds were restless and circled around and would not settle. It was too late and we had to rush in to save the nets from the incoming tide.

Thus ended a most interesting week-end and one from which both of us had learnt a good deal. Now we must get on with the business of mist netting waders here.

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LEN PARKES writes that with the recent arrival of the new products-carrying tankship 'Amokura' all the tankers on the New Zealand coast now have bird names. The three ships with Maori names are chartered from overseas, but registered in this country. The

fourth and oldest carries the name of a bird of European origin.

M.S. 'Kuaka' is named for the Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit, M.S. 'Kotuku' for the White Heron and the name given to the newest vessel M.S. 'Amokura' is the name given by the Maoris to the Red-tailed Tropic Bird which occasionally straggles to the south Tasman Sea and to northern New Zealand.

The veteran steam-turbine S.T.S. 'Erne' derives her name from a bird of distant seas, the White-tailed Sea Eagle which ranges in Europe and Asia. Once a prolific bird in Great Britain it was ruthlessly destroyed in the last century and is now extinct in that region.

Wreck of Antarctic Petrels and Fulmars

When the last OSNZ News went to press records of Antarctic Petrels were confirmed from Wellington and Northland. MAX FALCONER and DAVID CROCKETT alerted RRs and negative and positive results have been received since from nearly all regions, this response has been very pleasing.

The main wreck of Antarctic Petrels occurred in the last week of August and the first week of September. The earliest records came from Stewart Island, COLIN O'DONNELL finding one specimen on Mason's Bay 22 August and FRED OVERMARS finding one at Doughboy Bay the following day. As reported in the last newsletter the next records were from Wellington and Northland on 28 August.

Most Antarctic Petrels were ashore by 7 September however Antarctic Fulmars continued with small numbers still being found on 15 November. A preliminary count shows that 82 Antarctic Petrels and 346 Antarctic Fulmars were recovered. On receipt of further records the results will be collated for publication.

(DAVID CROCKETT)

Blue Ducks in the Catlins

Blue Ducks have been rediscovered recently in the headwaters of two of the rugged valleys of the Catlins district, south east Otago. There are thought to have been at least two pairs present over the 1977-78 summer, one pair having bred successfully since two ducklings were seen. The birds may have been present for some time since they were found by Forest Service officers surveying for waterfalls on stretches of the rivers not normally used by fishermen or opossum hunters.

Historically, Blue Ducks are known to have occurred in the Catlins in the 19th century. The surveyor Strauchon re-

ported that in 1884 in the Catlins valleys 'teal and grey duck are the most plentiful (waterfowl), although on the Tahakopa there are a good many blue and mountain ducks. Paradise ducks are very rare' (Strauchon, J. 1885. N.Z. House of Rep. Journal App. Vol. 1 C-1A: 27-28). The Catlins Blue Ducks appear to be relatively isolated since the Provisional Atlas of Bird Distribution shows Blue Ducks occurring only down the line of the Southern Alps.

JILL HAMEL

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Nests of Little Shags (pied, white-throated and smudgy) in the Hobson Bay, Auckland colony reached 35-40 by 20 October, when almost half were lost in strong winds. Renesting began promptly, while several surviving clutches had hatched at about that date and these chicks were out of the nest by mid-November. The smaller numbers of large Pied Shags (*Phalacrocorax varius*) now sharing this same tree (a large pohutukawa) are doing less well. Seven pairs have attempted to nest this spring, but only two remained, one with a sturdy chick, on 18 November when the colony was inspected by DON BINNEY and MICHAEL TAYLOR. Several of the former Pied Shag nests had been taken over by Little Shags.

1978-79 Chatham Island Taiko Expedition

With the re-discovery of the Chatham Island Taiko on 1 January 1978 and the realisation that in fact it was the long lost Magenta Petrel (*Pterodroma magentae*) interest now centres on the location of its breeding grounds. The finding of the breeding grounds becomes imperative for the survival and future conservation of the species. The remnant population is probably at an extremely low level and the Chatham Island Taiko must be considered an endangered species. As evidenced by archaeological and sub-fossil deposits on the Chathams the Taiko was extremely abundant in primeval times. However the presence of feral cattle, sheep, pigs and cats, coupled with the deterioration of the bush in the south west tableland must be contributing factors to the decline in the population.

After last summer's expedition, and following discussions with the Wildlife Service, a future expedition under my leadership was envisaged to utilize the expertise that has been developed during the five previous expeditions to the Tuku.

Preparations for the three month expedition began in February this year. There was no lack of interest in the

project with many people offering their services. In June, Allan Wotherspoon, a teacher on the Chathams between 1932 and 1945, supplied me with interesting information on flight calls of petrels he had heard during his residence on the Chathams. Acting on this new information the duration of the expedition was extended to six months — 17 November 1978 to 8 May 1979.

Expedition members, although primarily concerned with the Chatham Island Taiko, will be recording observations of other species; in particular the Chatham Island Pigeon and the Chatham Island Oystercatcher.

The Taiko project will have three main objectives: (i) to locate the breeding grounds (ii) to capture further examples of this species in order to obtain further information about dimensions, moult and plumage, and (iii) to patrol the beaches of the main Chatham Island with the chance of finding a beach-washed specimen of a Taiko for comparative taxonomic purposes.

The current expedition is being supported with generous grants and assistance from the following bodies: New Zealand Wildlife Service, Mobil Oil (N.Z.) Ltd. and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. I am grateful to Sir William Gilbert, Director of the World Wildlife Fund/New Zealand, who has been working to obtain sponsorship for items of equipment for use during the expedition.

Throughout the expedition further reports will be forwarded to the Editor for inclusion in *OSNZ News*.

DAVID E. CROCKETT

Items in TARA Nos. 1 - 10

Tara, the Bulletin of the Auckland Region, appears quarterly and an index has been compiled to cover the first ten issues (June 1976 to June 1978) which lists ornithological items and short articles from some 36 contributors.

While the contents have a deliberately local bias, *Tara* has included news from members travelling farther afield. Care is taken that items are also passed on for inclusion in *OSNZ News*, Classified Notes or the Society's various special schemes.

After launching and producing all the issues to date, Doug Booth is taking a well-earned rest and Robin Child has taken over as *Tara's* Editor. For anyone interested, copies of the index (free) and of most back numbers (20c each) are available from the Editor: Robin Child, 12 Komaru St., Remuera, Auckland 5. Please enclose a stamp for return postage.

Capper Press Catalogue

Capper Press Limited has notified the Society that their full list of reprinted books, mainly relating to the settlement history of New Zealand, is available on request. The catalogue includes a number of early books of interest to ornithologists, such as: *Narrative of a Residence of Various Parts of New Zealand* by Heaphy and *Out in the Open* by Potts.

Should any member wish to obtain a copy of the catalogue, they should write to: Capper Press Limited, P.O. Box 1388, Christchurch.

Wanted to Buy

Large libraries, small collections and individual books relating to the natural history and, in particular, the ornithology of Australasia are required by a private collector of ornithological literature. Of particular interest is a fine set of Gregory Mathews *Birds of Australia* and other rare works. Enquiries to: Harvey Dickinson, 26 Rose St., Bentleigh, Victoria 3204, Australia.

Symposium of Birds of the Sea and Shore

A five-day symposium, consisting of three days of formal sessions and two days of excursions, will be held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, from 19 to 23 November 1979. The theme of the symposium will be 'Birds of the sea and shore' and papers will be given on seabirds and waders, both coastal and inland. Excursions are planned for an offshore seabird breeding island, Langebaan Lagoon and a sea-watching cruise.

Persons interested in attending the Symposium should write to the Organizing Secretary, Mr. G. D. Underhill, 12 Roseberry Road, Mowbray 7700, South Africa, for further information.

Those wishing to deliver a paper should also write to Mr. J. Cooper, Southern African Seabird Group, Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa, giving details of their proposed paper. Abstracts will be requested at a later stage. It is intended to publish formal proceedings as a special supplement to *The Cormorant*, Bulletin of the Southern African Seabird Group.

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PETER CHILD asks, what has happened to the Welcome Swallows along the Otago coasts? He noted that there are no squares recording this species in the Provisional Atlas. A few years ago he noted them in at least three localities: near Karitane, at Hooper's Inlet on the Otago Peninsula, and at the Clutha River mouth (Inchclutha). Are there no permanent colonies along this stretch?

OSNZ Tie

Those who wear one have found that the birds are definitely attracted by it. Available from B. D. Bell, 9 Ferry Rd., Seatoun, Wellington (or from your RR). Send \$6.00, crossed cheque made out to Ornithological Society of N.Z. Medium grey weave, with repeated pattern of *Notornis* in red, blue and green colouring.

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On 12 October ALISON NEVILL watched a male Greenfinch on a silver birch tree near Lake Waipori. The bird was perched on a twig from which a bagworm was hanging. By hanging head-down the bird ran its beak down the bag repeatedly, thereby squeezing out the contents, which it ate. Two Silvereyes were watching the Greenfinch, one of them perched beside it but did not interrupt.

Subantarctic Islands Expedition

A Wildlife Service organised expedition left Christchurch for the Bounty and Antipodes Islands on 6 November. The proposed timetable included putting a three-man party ashore on the Bounty Islands for up to five weeks while the main party spent its time on the Antipodes Islands. Also, brief landings were scheduled for the Auckland and Snares Islands. Transport was being provided by HMNZS *Waikato*.

Several OSNZ members are involved with the expedition. On the Antipodes BRIAN BELL is expedition leader and is responsible for: making general bird surveys of the islands, completing a census of the Wandering Albatross population including chick banding and observations on breeding behaviour and assessing the status of the mollymawks and shags. MIKE IMBER is making observations on the status, distribution and breeding biology of all small petrels, while ROWLAND TAYLOR is studying the breeding biology and ecology of the Antipodes Islands Parakeet. JOHN KENDRICK is gathering sound recordings for the national sound collection of bird calls and MIKE SOPER is responsible for the photographic record.

CHRIS ROBERTSON, leader at the Bounty Islands, is studying the breeding biology, behaviour and ecology of Salvin's Mollymawks. Also on the Bounty Islands, Dr GERRY VAN TETS is studying the breeding biology and behaviour of Bounty Island Shags and Dr DON HORNING is collecting bird ectoparasites as part of his comprehensive invertebrate sampling programme.

RON NILSSON is leader at the Auckland and Snares Islands, where aerial surveys for birds will be made.

JOHN JENKINS and NEIL CHESHIRE are aboard HMNZS *Waikato* for the duration of the expedition, as it continues its fisheries protection duties in between island visits. John and Neil are making specific observations at sea to contribute to the seabird mapping scheme. This will be of especial importance as most species will be breeding and it will be possible to assess feeding zones and the possible relationships with foreign fishing vessels.

Sir ROBERT FALLA is an official guest of the navy during the expedition.

A TV camera crew is filming aspects of the expedition so we can look forward to seeing these on the screen.

The expedition is due to return to Auckland on 9 December. It is hoped to make a further report about the expedition in the next issue.

Chukor

MARTIN and JANE HEINE would be interested to hear if members have seen Chukor in areas as wet as where they have been seen in Mount Cook National Park. Chukor were sighted near the limits of their present range in the park as early as 1961 and are now moderately common breeding residents. They are found in the Hooker, Tasman, Murchison and Godley Valleys and extending to the Sealy, Mount Cook, Malte Brun and Liebig Ranges during the summer. Winters are spent on warm faces and matagouri fans at about 700 m a.s.l., while summer flocks are seen mainly at 1500 m, although occasional sightings have been made up to 1800 m. The annual rainfall on the eastern fringe of the park is about 2000 mm and increases (over a distance of 10 km) to 7000 mm on the western limit of the Chukor sightings.

Coromandel Peninsula

The Coromandel Peninsula turned on what South Auckland members have come to expect as typical Labour Weekend weather (cold, wet and windy) for the third annual forest bird survey. Despite this reputation 32 members from Auckland and South Auckland participated under BETH BROWN'S direction. On the last day Helen Boutell, Connie and George Schischka, John Staniland, Simon Chamberlain, Colin Miskelly, Tony Habraken and Beth were delighted to watch a pair of Kokako go about their business of feeding, including courtship feeding, at Mt. Maunapaki. Teams went to Mt Moehau, Whangapoua, Route 309 — near Whitianga, Mountain Park Station — near Coroglen, Waiomu and Maratoto. There were no new sight records of Kokako, however promising leads will be followed up.

Cattle Egrets near Gisborne

The flock of 17 reported by ARCHIE BLACKBURN as having arrived towards the end of May remained in the area, a few miles out of Gisborne city, throughout the winter and spring, and were last recorded by him on 30 Oct., when all 17 were in full breeding plumage. By keeping in touch with local farmers, it was ascertained that the flock disappeared on 2 Nov., which seems a very late departure for their breeding ground. Miss Ella Pratt, of Murwillumbah, N.S.W., informs Archie that this year the Cattle Egrets made a late start on a swamp which is situated in the middle of an industrial subdivision on the southern outskirts of Murwillumbah, over 500 birds beginning a feverish activity on 1 Nov. All four species of egrets nest on this swamp, as they do at Ulmarra Swamp near Grafton, N.S.W., where Archie first saw Cattle Egrets nesting in mid-Oct., 1959.

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A recent postcard from the travelling SIBSONS in the Isles of Scilly had news of sightings of Purple Sandpipers, Turnstones, and lone Meadow Pipit and Kestrel, tired from migration. While other human visitors sought for the passing glimpse of an extreme rarity RBS was suitably content among flocks of Sanderlings.

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Labour Weekend weather in Canterbury was closely akin to that in Coromandel, causing the postponement of the proposed survey of the Ashley River. However the very wet and windy weather did not deter Kathleen Harrison, Dick and Suzanne Webb, Phil Howell, Peter Wilson, Paul Sagar and Australian visitors Peter Dann and Margaret Consignedine from visiting the Ashley River mouth. They were rewarded by good views of 3 Whimbrel, 3 Turnstone, about 25 Wrybills and a Mongolian Dotterel besides the commoner species.

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ROY WESTON reports that on 21 October 1000+ Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Turnstones, 2 Wrybills, 1 Little Tern (2 on 29 October), 15 Golden Plover, 12 N.Z. Dotterel and 8 Banded Dotterel were seen on Port Ohope Spit.

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From Nelson, JENNY HAWKINS reports a N.Z. Dotterel in full breeding plumage at Nelson Haven on 7 September, a Tree Martin seen by Dr M. P. Harris at the base of Farewell Spit on 3 October and a flock of 18 Little Egrets at Rough Island on 29 September, reported by Mr and Mrs Chris Alberts.

Egret Survey 1978

The chart sets out the bare bones of our survey on 26/27 August 1978. Once again, congratulations to all regions and particularly those members who put in the time to follow the birds through the winter and to cover a wide area on count weekend.

Omitted from the chart is the lone Yellow-billed Spoonbill that is still in the Far North. The missing White Herons were probably mostly at the Okarito heronry. Apart from that, the figures in both years are remarkably alike in both islands. The trend to build-up of Cattle Egret before 1978 has stopped and the other egret species are remarkably stable. We thus already have a strong base line against which to measure any influx of egrets in the next few years, and to watch over the apparent slow decline of the Royal Spoonbill in New Zealand.

Once again, if all records on the egrets for the year are sent to the Recording Scheme, and of Cattle Egrets to Barrie Heather, the events of the whole year will not be lost.

A read through the paper in September *Notornis* will show the sort of inform-

ation that is most needed on Cattle Egret movements, numbers, plumage changes and habits. By now, most birds will have disappeared once again, I suppose, but if you see or hear of any over-summering, please do what you can to help with the meticulous daily record needed of the changes in plumage and soft-parts colouring that occur in the breeding period.

Please send a full summary of your observations for the year either directly or via your RR, to B. D. Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream, so that an account can be prepared for *Notornis*.
Contributors

The lists are probably not complete but the following are known to have taken part. If your name is unfairly missed, shoot your RR.

Those who took part on count weekend in Nelson region were Frank Boyce, Mal Clarbrough, Michael Clare, Peter Gaze, Eric Gillespie, Jenny Hawkins, Michael Hawkins, Jean King, Vincent O'Donnell, Keith Owen, David Rae, Gavin Radley, Frank and Berna Spoer.

In Hawkes Bay, John Hastie, Norman Mackenzie, Cara Saxby, Nancy Tanner, Kathleen Todd and Jim Watt.

In Manawatu, John Cockrem, Alan Carpenter, Bob and Sybil Creswell, Lindsay Davies, Michael Dennison, Howard Eastcott, John and Madeline LeLievre, Brian Preece, Hugh Robertson, Mike Tarburton and Roger Wasley.

In Waikato, Mercia Barnes, Rae Floyd, Lex Hedley, Russ Lacey, Helen McClymont, Roger Mayhill, John and Betty Seddon and Eric Taylor. In South Auckland, Barbara Burch, Beth Brown, Ken Fisher, Anthea Goodwin, Hazel and Tom Harty, Anton and Ian Habraken, David Lawrie, Ian Southey, Richard Spranger, Juliette Urquhart and family, Pam and David Walter and Peter Wilkinson.

In Far North, K. Brash, D. E. Crockett, B. S. Cooksey, A. T. Edgar, R. A. Froggatt, M. Hows, M. E. Wallis.

In Gisborne/Wairoa, Geoff Foreman and Bruce Henley (Wairoa) and Archie Blackburn, Jim Henley, Ted Jones and Mavis Williams (Gisborne).

In Bay of Plenty, Ray Jackson, Paddy Latham, Hamish Lyall, Tony Palliser and Roy Weston.

In Marlborough, Jack Cowie and Noel and Maureen Holdaway.

In West Coast, C. Burrige, N. Climo, C. S. Lauder, Mr & Mrs MacDonald, D. Murray, D. Onley and N. Stopforth.

In Otago, Iloyd Esler, George Grant, Jill and Michael Hamel, Hugh Hogg, Tim Jackson, Ian McLaren, Pat and Karen Miller and Murray Neilson.

In Canterbury, Rob and Gillian Guest, Kathleen Harrison, Frank Hollay, Phil Howell, Les McPherson, Ian McVinnie, Wilf Mawson, Bill Rogers, Paul Sagar, Stewart Vogel and Peter Wilson.

E. & O. E.

* * * *

On 6 July, at the Mercury Bay Golf Course, ALAN JONES saw a Tui feeding in a gum tree when two mynas flew in and attacked the Tui. After about 5 minutes of vigorous fighting the Tui chased both mynas out of the tree and then returned to finish its feeding.

* * * *

Following the report about Grey-faced Petrels on Mount Maunganui (OSNZ News 8) PADDY LATHAM made two further visits and found some occupied burrows. Unfortunately in late September/early October borough council staff spent some time cutting and burning gorse in the area and on visits to the area in October the previously occupied burrows were found choked with leaves and cobwebs. Hopefully the burrows higher up the mountain were unaffected.

EGRET DISTRIBUTION 26-27 AUGUST 1978 (Figures for 1977 in brackets)

	Cattle Egret	White Heron	Little Egret	Royal Spoonbill	Glossy Ibis	White Ibis
Stewart I.						
Southland	22 (21)	1 (0)	1 (2)	0 (2)		
Otago	1 (0)	3 (6)	1 (2)			
West Coast	15 (20)	13 (7)	0 (1)	17 (0)		
Canterbury	20 (14)	7 (13)	0 (2)		0 (4)	0 (1)
Marlborough	6 (22)	1 (3)	0 (1)			
Nelson	34 (20)	7 (13)	4 (2)	12 (22)		
SOUTH ISLAND	98 (97)	32 (42)	6 (10)	27 (24)	0 (4)	0 (1)
West Wellington		3 (0)	0 (1)			
Manawatu	18 (15)	1 (2)	2 (0)	15 (18)	0 (1)	1 (0)
Wanganui	0 (9)					
Wairarapa	0 (7)	0 (1)			0 (1)	
Hawkes Bay	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (2)		
Gisborne/Wairoa	17 (5)	3 (5)		0 (2)		
Taranaki	6 (26)		2 (2)	0 (1)		
Bay of Plenty/Rotorua	3 (7)	3 (2)			0 (1)	0 (1)
Waikato/South Auck.	67 (97)	7 (8)	0 (1)		1 (0)	
Auckland	9 (4)	4 (7)	3 (3)			
Far North	30 (25)	8 (14)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (0)	0 (2)
NORTH ISLAND	150 (196)	29 (41)	9 (12)	17 (25)	2 (3)	(3)
NZ TOTAL	248 (293)	61 (83)	15 (22)	44 (49)	2 (7)	1 (4)

A Project for Anyone — diving times of shags and grebes

This has been suggested by CHRIS LALAS, a student at Otago University, at present doing a PhD study on the diving behaviour of shags in Otago Harbour. He is interested in information from all areas on any species of shag, on Dabchick or other grebes, or on any other diving species such as Scaup and penguins.

Anyone can easily contribute, with observations of from 5 minutes to 5 hours, according to how long you can manage. There are just a few simple rules to follow so that your notes are useable.

All that is wanted is a series of counts of time spent underwater and time spent on the surface. Each separate series must be for the *one* bird. For example, you may follow an individual shag or dabchick in a sequence of 12 dives with 11 pauses on the surface in between. Record the time of each dive and each pause in seconds.

With each new individual bird, start a new sequence. You should end up with a lot of sequences of different lengths, according to how long you could follow single birds without getting confused with others. This method cannot be used when there is a feeding flock or if for other reasons you cannot be sure of following one bird at a time.

A useful way of recording the times in the field is to note merely the figures on your watch where the second-hand is when the bird dives or surfaces, and work out the times later. For example, you might note: 12-20 26-36 45-55. This would later translate as: 8 mins under, 6 mins pause on surface, 10 mins under, 9 mins pause, 10 mins under.

The object of all this is to calculate the diving efficiency of various diving birds, the simplest measure of which is divide dive time by time spent on surface.

DON'T MAKE COUNTS when

1. One bird may be confused with another (e.g. a feeding flock).
2. The bird is alarmed by your presence and is therefore not feeding naturally.
3. The bird is obviously not feeding regularly and therefore typically.
4. When the bird is not feeding 'normally' (e.g. a pair of Dabchicks feeding young).

DO RECORD:

1. A sequence of dives and surface pauses, not just odd single dives.
2. Whenever food is clearly brought to the surface (usually visible as swallowing movements).

3. Whenever the pause time is extended by preening movements or by swallowing problems (e.g. shag and eel).
4. Record the times in seconds, using second-hand of watch or a stopwatch. Don't guess times.

SEND IN:

1. Species name.
2. Place.
3. Habitat (e.g. Freshwater: river, stream, lake, dune lagoon, farm dam, sewage pond, etc.) (e.g. Saltwater: estuary, tidal harbour, intertidal coast, sea beyond low tide, etc.)
4. Sequence of dive and pause times.
5. Further helpful points if known: water depth, age of bird (juvenile/adult).

Please send your records, however limited, to Mr C. Lalas, Portobello Marine Laboratory, P.O. Box 8, Portobello, Dunedin. All records will be acknowledged and used. Any progress will be reported in *OSNZ News*.

Possible Hooded Dotterel

SHANE COTTER reports that on 22 October, when he and ANDREW SIM were beach patrolling on Palliser Spit, they came across a strange dotterel feeding along the high tide line. They describe it as being slightly larger than a Banded Dotterel, with head and upper breast dark chocolate brown, white underparts, back and wings the same colour as a Banded Dotterel. In flight it had a distinctive white wing bar and the tail had a dark centre and tip, with white outer tail coverts.

Unfortunately neither Shane nor Andrew had a pair of binoculars with them and they were unable to give further details of the bird. However the bird was certainly a strange dotterel so members should keep a sharp eye on their local wader habitats this summer.

Classified Summarised Notes

A glance through these in *Notornis* will soon show that they are only half the length of previous years. This is not due to a malicious purge by RBS but to lack of support or of activity by members. We cannot believe that most members saw no birds or bird behaviour of interest in 1977/78 but CSN make it seem so. May bird-pox descend on those who simply forgot to send in their notes. We hope that CSN in 1979 will contain all those missing items from this last year. Don't wait till June 1979 to send in the forgotten notes; do it now. You were reminded often enough in *OSNZ News*; if you don't believe that, then check inside front cover of *Notornis*: the Recording Scheme is administered by R. B. SIBSON, 26 Entrican Avenue, Auckland 5.

* * * *

The September issue of *Corella* records several banding returns of interest to New Zealanders. A Curlew Sandpiper banded by Fred van Gessel in NSW on 29 January 1977, was caught in a field in southern China, west of Hong Kong, on 14 May 1978. Cattle Egret fans will be interested in the bird banded as a nestling near Grafton, north-eastern NSW on 10 January 1978, recovered as "remains on a railway track" in Tasmania on 27 April 1978. The distance, 1550 km, is apparently the longest recorded in Australia; very roughly the distance from North Cape or Invercargill to Farewell Spit. A banded bird seen in NZ would soon break that record, but none reported so far. Also reported is a Southern Giant Petrel (*giganteus*) banded offshore near Sydney by Bill Lane on 31 July 1977 and recovered on Ninety Mile Beach, Northland, on 24 April 1978. (Who found this?)

Provisional Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand

There are still copies available, mainly because some members have kept meaning to get one but have not sat down to write away for it. It is important to support this combined effort of the Society's members and to see for yourself what needs to be done in your area before the final atlas can be prepared in the early 1980s.

Please post me copy/copies of the PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF BIRD DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ZEALAND.

OSNZ members, one copy at \$6.00 Extra copies and non-members \$10.00.

NAME

ADDRESS

Send order to OSNZ BIRD ATLAS, c/o P.O. Box 12397, WELLINGTON NORTH.

(All cheques to be made payable to OSNZ).

A limited number of copies are also available from RRs.

Surprise — costs are increasing

As a result of long discussion by Council at its October meeting, our Treasurer, HUGH HOGG, has prepared the information from which the following note is taken.

The cost of printing and distribution of *Notornis* and *OSNZ News* and of the Society's running expenses have continued to go up. It is estimated that for 1978 the rate of increase will be greater than previously.

	1975	1976	1977	1978
<i>Notornis</i> cost (\$)	6769	7172	7759	11631 (est.)
<i>News</i> cost	—	330 (1 issue)	1227	1424 (est.)
Total	6769	7502	8986	13055
Cost per member	5.83	6.39	7.14	10.09
Cost of running Soc. per member	0.85	1.15	1.20	1.20 (est.)
Total per member	6.68	7.54	8.34	11.29

Over these years, the subscription for ordinary membership has remained at \$6.00. This means in effect that the Society is now receiving \$6.00 from each member and giving back over \$11.00.

The shortfall between the cost per member and the subscription has in recent years been met by the profit on the sale of Christmas cards and by the interest received from the invested funds. These extras are not expected to cover 1978 increases and a substantial deficit is anticipated. This is partly because sales of Christmas cards are now much lower than they used to be.

It is obvious that the subscription rate will have to be increased. Council has decided that a motion to increase the rate, to be effective from January 1980, is to be submitted to the next AGM in May 1979.

Delayed September *Notornis*

The editor and printers of *Notornis* apologise to members for the delayed issue of September. This was unavoidable as, although everything was ready in good time, the final printing happened to coincide with a major shift of printing machinery in Gisborne to new premises. It is fair to say that delays in the past have rarely been the fault of the printer, from whom we have had fine service.

It is worth pointing out that, now that we have *OSNZ News* as a regular feature, it has become difficult to get *Notornis* out on time. The preparation of *OSNZ News* is a last-minute frenzy for its editor, not helped by material that arrives after the deadline.

The most difficult issue of the year is always the December one, meeting as it does the Christmas rush of demands on printers, the January closing of printers, and a slower movement of mail. We shall continue to do our best.

* * * *

The pair of Little Grebes had returned to the farm pond at Bell Hill, Westland, when STEWART LAUDER made one of his frequent checks. Both birds were in breeding plumage but there was no sign of a nest. A close watch is being kept to determine whether the pair breed more successfully than they did last summer (see *Notornis* 25: 251-252).

MAURICE FIELD and COLIN MISKELLY estimated 25 Red-necked Stints among Turnstones at Karaka on 25 October; an extraordinary count as 12-14 are more usual. The elusive Grey Plover has been seen there again. Naturally by TONY HABRAKEN, who seems to specialise in this particular rarity and who has seen them in three separate places, black auxiliaries and all. BETH BROWN has half seen one on two occasions, once at Paua and once in the Firth of Thames. The third time was lucky, when Farewell Spit benignly turned on three together. These were approached, fittingly, on bended knees. DICK SIBSON, who shared the Paua and Firth of Thames birds, was there. Tony Habraken, also present on this occasion, volunteered to do what proved to be a long and painful stalk — flat on the mud, propelled on elbows and knees, camera held up in one hand. RBS and Beth never did admit whether they were stalking or praying . . . but when the camera shutter had clicked a few times and the trio finally flew off they were treated to the marvellous sight of three wide white tail bands and three pairs of white wing bars and, most notably, those three pairs of jet-black wing-pits as they turned in unison.

Te Rau Press 7770

Waikato Weekend

Waikato members were joined by a group of 15 Auckland and 3 South Auckland members for a weekend (19-20 August) at the Junior Naturalists, Oparau Lodge, near Kawhia Harbour. Making the most of the good weather a wide variety of habitats were explored. One group went to Tahora, exploring swamps and estuaries on the south side of Kawhia Harbour on the way. They discovered Fernbird and Spotless Crake and were fortunate to see the latter flying. A most productive beach patrol was made along this wild West Coast beach with a Cape Pigeon, Narrow-billed Prion, Grey-headed and Shy Mollymawk, Giant Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar and 21 Fluttering Shearwaters being collected. Other groups explored Kawhia and Aotea Harbours in dinghies with a Black Stilt and a Grey-tailed Tattler being seen.

Kokako were heard by bush parties but no sightings were made. Swamps bordering Aotea Harbour showed good numbers of Fernbirds and Spotless Crake and many happy hours were spent sitting in the sun watching these delightfully secretive birds.

It has been suggested that this popular weekend should become an annual event. BETTY SEDDON

Back numbers wanted

As back numbers of *Notornis* are no longer being printed, to save cost to the Society, and as young and new members will continue to want to buy back numbers, it is important that we do not lose copies no longer wanted by members or former members.

If you know of someone who may have unwanted copies, a resigned member or an estate, it would be appreciated if you could suggest that all *Notornis* issues be donated to the Society. If in doubt, please inform your RR or any other official of the Society.

Banded Dotterels colour banded

RAY PIERCE has been putting colour bands on Banded Dotterel chicks in the MacKenzie Basin. Therefore could members please keep an eye out for these birds during the coming winter. The position of the metal band is irrelevant in this instance. Send sightings to: R. J. Pierce, Zoology Dept., University of Otago, Box 56, Dunedin.

* * * *

ROB WHEELER has sent in the first record of Spur-winged Plovers from Taranaki. Two birds were seen frequenting a large ploughed paddock on a farm near Urenui at the end of September.