



OSNZ news

No. 16 September, 1980

NOTE: Deadline for December 1980 issue will be 22nd November.

Willy the Wanderer

Those who regularly go on beach patrols get their surprises and rewards. The team (Colin Miskelly, Jane Wells and Kathie Parkinson) which patrolled Muriwai from 35 to 27 km on 6 April found an immature Wandering Albatross on the tide line, alive but in a state of exhaustion. With great persistence, Colin carried the bird off the beach, a distance of over 5 km according to his reckoning! However, first he took the precaution of tying up the formidable bill.

The bird was christened 'Willy,' and loaded into the back of my Suzuki. Along with another passenger, he was taken to Meadowbank where the problem of accommodation was soon solved by rigging an enclosure. As Willy would not take food and had obviously been starving for some time, it was thought advisable to get some salt and glucose solution into him. This was achieved by 'tubing,' an operation requiring three people, one of whom required considerable strength to open the bill. After this process, Willy wagged his head and commented in hoarse guttural tones. Much the same procedure had to be followed during force-feeding over the next three days. Then he deigned to pick up a squid or two from the ground, and by 11 April had perked up considerably and put on weight.

It was decided that the sooner he went back to sea the better, so arrangements were made for him to be taken out on the 'Union Rotorua' when she sailed on 14 April. Under the care of Neil Cheshire, navigator, Willy sailed that evening and was released 9 km west of Cape Colville. Launched over the stern of the ship, he went into a shallow dive and landed on the water without undue force. Darkness precluded further observation.

From the development of his plumage, Willy appeared to be no more than 18 months old, unless he came from the Antipodes Islands, where older birds retain their fledgling plumage. The bill

was pink with ivory tip, top of head, hind neck and back were mid-brown, tips of primaries and tail feathers black, very small patches of vermiculations on shoulders, underparts dusky throughout. Iris brown, with a ring of white skin around the eye. Measurements were: culmen 166.4, wing 706, tarsus 114.2, tail 202, mid-toe and claw 179.6, wing span 301 cm. The wing was particularly long and exceeds the range given in Serventy & Warham (p. 65). This would seem to confirm that Willy could not have been *Wilhelmina*!

SYLVIA REED

Help for Black Stilts

The Black Stilt was relatively common in the South Island and southern North Island 100 years ago, nesting as far north as Rotorua. But a rapid decline occurred and 50 years ago they were limited to inland Canterbury and Otago. This decline has continued; according to the Wildlife Service there has been a 25 to 30% decline in numbers since 1973. The 1979 winter count gave an adult population of only 50 to 55 birds, made up of 20 breeding pairs and surplus males.

Studies by Ray Pierce (Zoology Department, University of Otago) have shown that in spite of the massive disruption of the breeding grounds of the Black Stilt in the McKenzie Basin as a result of hydro-electric development, more suitable habitat is available than there are Black Stilts to fill.

Predation is by far the most important cause of the decline in numbers, ferrets and feral cats being the prime predators. Moves are being made to combat these predators and to protect the remnants of the species. The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society is providing \$6,900 to protect a Black Stilt breeding area from predators. A hectare of prime Black Stilt breeding ground at Mailbox Inlet at Lake Tekapo will be protected by wire-mesh fence with an outward overhang and an electric wire on top. Power will be from solar cells developed at the University of Canterbury, with a battery back-up. Helped by the Canterbury and South Canterbury branches of the RFBPS, Ray hopes to

have the fence up and operational before the start of the 1980 breeding season in August.

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4, for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject to confirmation.

In case this proves unsuccessful, the Wildlife Service has begun a programme to breed Black Stilts in captivity at Mount Bruce. Ten birds were hatched there last year. Although successful release of birds into the wild is a long way off, at least the species should be saved by this method.

PAUL SAGAR

Redcliff Observatory, Southland

Following last year's successful open day at Lionel and Jean Lobb's aviaries, when \$380 was raised for the Southland branch, work on the building of an OSNZ observatory at the Redcliff Wetland Reserve has been completed. A feature of the early stages of this project was the generous donation of money, materials and labour. My sincere thanks to all those who contributed. As a result of all this we now have a well-appointed observatory (complete with wall to wall carpet!) from which splendid views of the wetland birds can be made in complete comfort. It is hoped that members will feel free to make full use of this asset at all times.

ROGER SUTTON

Urenui Petrel Colony

Two visits were made to the Carrs Road colony in September-October 1979 by Taranaki members. The presence of Grey-faced Petrels was confirmed (one was caught) and the suspected presence of Diving Petrels confirmed on the second trip. Diving Petrels also appear to be nesting on a further stack a few hundred metres to the west.

R. E. LAMBERT

Election of Officers

The results of the election of OSNZ officers are: President — Mr R. B. Sibson. Council — Dr P. C. Bull, Mr D. E. Crockett and Mr P. M. Sagar. Those elected assume office immediately. R. S. SLACK, *Secretary*

New Service to Members — Journal Circulation

Do you want to see other journals regularly, or at least to sample some and see what they are like?

Do you want access to literature and references that help you with your own interests?

Do you want to practise your reading skill in one or more foreign languages, helped by English summaries?

Do you want to read some popular magazines and newsletters on natural history overseas?

Do you want to read regularly about bird study in, say, Australia, Papua New Guinea, USA, Britain, southern Africa, or Europe — without paying enormous subscriptions?

You can now because, for a trial period, the circulation of new issues of journals to members who want them has been revived. It will start as soon as members have told the Librarian what journals they want to receive; the mailing lists have been drawn up, and the fee to cover costs has been worked out.

Steps to take

1. Study the list of journals we receive and decide which, if any, you want to receive.
2. Send your list to the Hon. Librarian, A. J. Goodwin, RD1, Clevedon, together with \$1.00 to cover costs of a year's issues of each journal you want.

DO IT NOW!

We pay a subscription for some journals, but we receive most on exchange for *Notornis*. Both Anthea Goodwin and Council have been concerned how little the volume of information our library gets is used by members. We hope many members will be interested in using this service, which means a lot of extra work for Anthea but willingly offered to those who appreciate it. The scheme will work smoothly as long as you don't hold an issue more than a few days and keep it moving (photocopy an article if it is important to you), if you look after issues, and tell Anthea if you are to be away from home for long.

The fee for a year's issues of a journal cannot be worked out yet. Most journals have 4 issues a year; some, notably *British Birds*, have 12. They vary a lot in size and weight and so in postage cost. Also, we don't yet know the exact rates of the big new postage charges, not helped by the abolition of the present Library Rate. A year's fee will also depend on the number of members wanting a journal and so sharing the costs. Therefore, the \$1.00 is only to help out in the meantime. But the scheme must pay for itself, including a small allowance for the expensive replacement of any issue lost or spoilt while on circulation.

I have looked through samples of most journals and hope the subjective comments will help. If you're not sure about some journal, why not ask for one copy in the meantime??

BARRIE HEATHER

The following journals interest me; now you pick yours:

1. All Australian ones except Tasmanian; PNG newsletters.
2. Britain: Wader Study Group Bulletin; *British Birds*; *Ibis*; *Bird Study*.
3. America: *Western Birds*; *Condor*; *The Living Bird*.
4. Africa: *The Ostrich* (The Cormorant is a must for seabird enthusiasts).
5. Non-English language: *Le Gerfaut*; Misc. Reports Yamashina Inst.

We receive the following journals —

AUSTRALASIA

The Emu (Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union)
Corella (Aust. Bird Study Association)

South Australian Ornithologist (SA Orn. Assoc.)

The Australian Bird Watcher (Bird Observers Club, Victoria)

The Sunbird (Queensland Orn. Soc.)

Papua New Guinea Newsletter (PNG Bird Soc.)

The Tasmanian Naturalist (Tas. Field Nat. Club)

All these have much general interest; Tas. one covers general nat. hist.

BRITAIN

Wader Study Group Bulletin: Study methods, interim reports from many countries, migration, trapping, publications.

British Birds: West Palearctic coverage; many photos & drawings; identifica-

tion problems, esp. of waders; book reviews.

Ibis: Scientific studies, often of great general interest.

Bird Study: Valuable for methods of study, analysis, and writing up; species surveys, diet, migration, weight studies.

Scottish Birds: Activities and studies in Scotland.

Wildfowl: 1 large issue; papers on wildfowl research in many countries.

AMERICA

Western Birds: Covers all Pacific states, Alaska to Hawaii and Mexico; readable and useful.

The Living Bird: 1 large issue; readable detailed studies of a wide range of groups, mainly but not only North American.

American Museum Novitates: Irregular; contain special studies, often of much significance.

The Condor: Wide variety, not just American; fairly elaborate content.

Chesapeake Science: Fairly full studies in estuarine ecology and chemicals; not ornithological in emphasis.

The Auk: Detailed papers often heavy reading.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Cormorant: Essential on S. Hemisphere seabirds.

The Ostrich: Papers on many groups, well presented; esp. waders.

JAPAN

Tori: In Japanese; English summaries.
Miscellaneous Reports, Yamashina Inst. for Ornithology: In Japanese; contents, titles, tables, figures, and lengthy summaries in English.

EUROPE

Le Gerfaut (Belgium): Papers in English, French, Dutch; often very useful.

Ardea (Holland).

Alauda (France).

L'Oiseau et la Revue Francaise (France).

Journal fur Ornithologie (Germany).

Ornithologische Mitteilungen (Germany).

Die Vogelwelt (Germany).

Die Vogelwarte (Germany).

Anzieger der Orn. Gesellschaft in Bayern (Germany).

Der Ornithologische Beobachter (Switzerland).

Auspicium (Germany): Ringing report.

Larus (Yugoslavia).

Ardeola (Spain).

Ornis Fennica (Finland).

Finnish Game Research.

Var Fagelvarld (Sweden).

Aquila (Hungary).

Acta Ornithologica (Poland).

Notatki Ornitologiczna (Poland).

The Ring (Poland): in English.

Most of these journals have English summaries; some have English papers; but in general are in their national language with English, French or German summaries.

NEWSLETTERS & MAGAZINES

IUCN Bulletin (International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland): Newsletter style; in English.

The Explorer (USA): A natural sciences magazine.

Bokmakierie (S. Africa): General ornithological articles in popular style.

Elepaio (Hawaiian Audubon Soc.): Newsletter style.

Country-side: Natural history articles (British) in popular style.

BTO News: A fairly formal newsletter of British Trust studies.

The Bird Observer (Victoria): Straight newsletter.

Audubon: Illustrated general articles on nature (USA).

Cattle Egret recoveries in Australia and other recent records

In *Corella* 4 (1), March 1980, the regular section of Recovery Roundup includes two more of the Cattle Egrets banded by Jack Willows in the Grafton and 'Murwillumbah' colonies. One, banded in December 1972, was found dead in Victoria in August 1979 (1390 km); another, banded in January 1979, was captured (how?!) in Tasmania in August 1979 (1600 km).

Also reported is a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper banded in NSW on 12/2/77 and found dead in south-eastern China on 10/4/77 (4700 km).

In *Corella* 3 (5), December 1979, is reported a White-fronted Tern banded at Kaikoura by Jack Cowie on 3/12/77 and found dead in South Australia on 4/2/79. A Reef Heron in Queensland, banded as a nestling in October 1963 was found dead in the same place 14 years 9 months later.

A White Ibis banded as a nestling in Victoria in September 1964 was shot in the same place 14 years 9 months later.

BARRIE HEATHER

Cattle Egret Survey 1980

By a week after newsletter deadline, results of the survey of 23-24 August had not been received from four regions, and so the year's results and pattern are not complete.

Totals so far: North Island 294 Cattle Egret (Northland, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay still to come); South Island 334 Cattle Egret (Southland and part of West

Coast still to come). New Zealand total 628.

I would guess that the total will be some 100 birds more than last year. The pattern of migration seems unchanged, as was shown by a map of arrival dates at the AGM, and few birds oversummer still. The most regular oversummering spot seems to be Piako, Firth of Thames. The 9 birds there in late January varied from fully coloured to all-white, and yet they mostly showed wing moult and so cannot have included juveniles. The Ellesmere birds, despite high hopes, vanished in the critical summer months, and so Canterbury breeding is still not known.

Cattle Egret breeding is not likely to be either subtle or secretive. We are conditioned in New Zealand by the history of White Heron and Royal Spoonbill breeding. The CE still feeds on farmland while breeding and after breeding, adults and newly fledged young should be rather obvious on farmland near breeding colonies. This is why NZ breeding seems unlikely so far.

Canterbury and Otago numbers have gone up strongly this year; elsewhere numbers have risen slightly or even dropped slightly. In several regions, the tendency to a few favoured localities, accompanied by abandoning other previously favoured localities, has been more marked than ever (e.g. Rangiriri in Waikato, Parakai in Kaipara, Nukumaru in Wanganui, Foxton No. 1 in Manawatu, Takaka and Appleby in Nelson, Grovetown in Marlborough, Taumutu, Ellesmere in Canterbury). Strangely, rich egret-feeding districts such as Taranaki and Wairarapa continue to be largely ignored by CE, except in passing.

Regional results

Auckland: 18 at Parakai. *South Auckland*: 29 (28 at Piako, 1 at Karaka). *Waikato*: 128 (flocks of 107 and 18 at Rangiriri; 3 at Ohaupo). *Bay of Plenty*: 0. *Taranaki*: 0. *Wanganui*: 31 at Nukumaru. *Manawatu*: 78 (Moutoa 5, Foxton No. 1 68, L. Horowhenua 5). *Wairarapa*: 0.

Marlborough: 31 at Grovetown, 0 elsewhere. *Nelson*: 55 (Appleby 17, Wakefield 2, Riwaka 5, Takaka 31). *West Coast*: 25 (Karamea 12, Orewaiti 1, Rotomanu 4, Kowhiterangi 8). *Canterbury*: 167 (Waikuku 8, Kaiapoi 1, Taumutu 91, Hinds 5 + 5, Rangitata Huts 3, Eiffelton 11, Clandeboye 19, Washdyke 3, Kingsdown 13, Otipua, Timaru 8). *Otago*: 55 (Oamaru district 31, Taieri Plain 3, Kaitangata 9, Paretai-Kaka Pt 4, Owaka 8).

BARRIE HEATHER

ROB and GILLIAN GUEST report that whilst in the process of emigrating from the mainland on 22 February they saw a Brown Booby from the inter-island ferry. They were about half-way up the Sound from Picton and had been watching a number of Gannets fishing nearby when the bird passed across the stern of the ship. It was flying swiftly, and its streamlined shape and size drew their attention to it as an unfamiliar bird.

The overall impression was of a dark bird, but as it flew overhead the dividing line on the breast between the dark upper- and light underparts was clearly visible.

The bird was watched until it disappeared rapidly from sight close to the southern shore of the Sound.

Tuki Tuki River Estuary

In mid-April and early May 1980 the Tuki Tuki River estuary abounded with birds — Black-fronted, White-fronted and Caspian Terns; Black-billed, Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls; Black, Little Black and Little Shags; White-faced Herons and Mallards. The rising tide created many inlets between the shingle spits and these were ideal for roosting birds.

One day a flock of c60 Little Black Shags appeared from the rivermouth following and feeding upon a shoal of fish. Black Shags joined in too but soon gave up. However, the Little Black Shags persisted and their long line churning up the water was broken continuously by birds moving from the rear to the front. They kept pace with the fish right around the main channel and on up the river, feeding on the ever diminishing shoal.

KATHLEEN TODD

White-fronted Terns breeding in Australia

The March 1980 issue of *The Australian Bird Watcher* (vol. 8 no. 5) records in detail, with ample illustrations, the first definite breeding outside New Zealand of the White-fronted Tern. This was on Battery Island, in the Furneaux Group off the north-east corner of Tasmania. The author, J. S. Whinray, found 4-6 pairs in January 1979 with nests and eggs and also young at stages up to flying. He also believes that an early record in 1893 on another island of this Group was definitely of this species, and his argument is plausible. I imagine the record has stimulated some ornithological activity in the Furneaux Group in the 1979-80 season and wonder what has been found.

BARRIE HEATHER

High-flying Plover

During a recent trip into the Murchison Mountains our party heard an unusual call near the hut at the head of the McKenzie Burn on the night of 29 March 1980. Being alert for Takahe or kiwi calls at night, we came out of the hut to try and identify and pinpoint the location of the calling bird. To our surprise the unmistakable raucous sound of a lone Spur-winged plover was heard by the lake below the hut. The bird called two or three times but was not seen and we never heard it call again during the few days we spent in the area.

Good numbers of Spur-winged Plovers occur in the Te Anau basin farmland, but our observation was made at 1158 m and about 26 km from Te Anau as the plover flies. To my knowledge this is the first record of this species in the Murchisons and adds yet another to the list of 45 species recorded in that area (Reid, B. 1970. *Notornis* 17: 56-61).

ROGER LAVERS

Band and Tag

This is a regular column which will feature in each issue of *OSNZ news* to give members up to date information about bird banding activities, both here and overseas.

The Banding Office of the Wildlife Service is recovering from two years of difficult conditions in the staffing field. However, the staffing situation is more stable now and this situation should continue. CHRIS ROBERTSON continues for the present as Banding Officer, but during 1981 expects to be spending a greater amount of time on scientific duties. Appointed as Technician and Deputy Banding Officer in March this year RODERICK COSSEE is a new arrival in New Zealand. Previously employed as a technician at the University of Leiden and Rotterdam Natural History Museum, and as a public relations officer with Van-Nelle-Lassie he brings a wide variety of skills to the position. He served an apprenticeship here for six months sorting out the records of Dr J. A. Mill's Red-billed Gulls. Mrs LILLIAN BILLINGTON, as Clerk replaces the late Jean Llewellyn. Mrs Billington is to be thanked for keeping the ship afloat during 1979.

Since March we have concentrated on processing a large backlog of operator recoveries before reactivating the computer storage system early in 1981. Currently we expect the system to be fully operational again about September 1981, after the normal checking processes for new data are completed. At that stage we will be able to provide a standard

listing of recoveries for operators who require them. However, special listings and analyses which require unique programmes will need to be discussed extensively with the Banding Office. Individuals requiring information for publications etc. should be aware that banding data are held on behalf of the individual operators and their permission is required before these data are released.

Elsewhere in this issue of *OSNZ news* is an item explaining the appointment of Lou Gurr as Banding Liaison Officer for the Society. Lou has had a session at the Banding Office to learn the ropes round the office and to meet the staff. We look forward to our dealings with the Society in this way.

Over the next few issues we will be looking at some of the personalities and projects operating in the banding field as well as a round up of interesting recoveries from the Mail Bag.

However, as members of the Society, what information do you want to see discussed in this column? Please write and suggest questions that you would like answered. As a start we will ask you two questions. Correct answers and the closest reply will be given in the next issue.

1. Give the name of the species with the longest banded age recorded in the New Zealand banding scheme. What age is the oldest bird?
2. Name the N.Z. species where the total known population is banded. How many have been banded?

Banding Mail Bag

C-22055 White-faced Storm Petrel. Banded as an adult, South-East Island, Chatham, on 10/2/80. Recovered dead, 1200 km off Peruvian coast on 22/5/80 by German research vessel 'Sonne.' This is the first recovery of this species outside N.Z. waters.

R-33548 Northern Royal Albatross. Banded as an adult male, Sisters Island, Chatham, on 11/2/74. Recovered off Topacio, Argentina (39°32'S, 57°02'W), on 29/4/80. This is the first recovery of this subspecies outside the Pacific.

J-413 Erect-crested Penguin. Banded as an adult, Antipodes Island on 4/2/69. Recovered breeding same locality on 11/11/78.

J-1494 Yellow-eyed Penguin. Banded as a chick, Owaka, Otago, on 17/1/78. Recovered dead, Paekakariki, on 14/5/78.

D-20178 Sooty Tern. Banded as a chick, Raoul Island on 18/12/62. Recovered dead where banded on 7/12/78.

D-52940 Tui. Banded as a juvenile,

Little Barrier Island on 8/3/68. Recovered dead where banded on 28/2/80. 18-25637 Canada Goose. Banded at unknown age, Lake Ellesmere on 10/1/57. Recovered shot at same locality on 3/2/79. This must have been tough eating.

First recovery of banded tree

19-19633. (One of 5000 surplus aluminium bands sold to Ecology Division, DSIR, for use as tree markers).

Buddleia davidii tagged August 1970, retrapped 1971 and 1972. When last seen was on edge of stream which had changed course. All *Buddleia* plots were washed away and buried in shingle during a thunderstorm in December 1975 (50 mm rain in 30 minutes). Recovered still attached to trunk of plant as driftwood on beach between Orongorongo and Wainuiomata Rivers on 22/8/80. Distance as crow flies 10 km from place of marking.

Answers to questions and suggestions for further information in *OSNZ news* to: Banding Officer, Banding Mail Bag, Wildlife Service, Private Bag, Wellington.

C. J. R. ROBERTSON

Kawhia Harbour Census

On the weekend of 28-29 June Kawhia Harbour was the scene of great activity. A combined camp of OSNZ members and the newly-formed bird group of the Hamilton Junior Naturalists' Club was held at the Te Kauri Lodge, Oparau. This enabled members to do an extensive beach patrol on the Saturday and a very successful harbour census the following day.

The techniques of identifying beach wrecks was demonstrated on the interesting products of the patrol. These included a White-headed Petrel, Buller's and Sooty Shearwaters and a Shy Mollymawk. In the evening Lex Hedley, recently returned from overseas, gave a fascinating talk about raptors. He emphasised how the disappearance of suitable feeding and nesting habitats is affecting Harrier and Falcon numbers. Slides to help identify harbour birds were also shown.

Sunday dawned clear and calm and enabled boats and canoes to be launched at several points around the harbour. The boat and shore parties reassembled at the Lodge in the afternoon to warm blue feet and frozen hands and discuss the sightings.

Among the birds seen were 8 Black Stilts, 1750 SIPO, 145 Bar-tailed Godwit, 2 Knot, 390 Banded Dotterel and 2 N.Z. Dotterel.

BETTY SEDDON

Marked Gannets

Only a few records of marked gannets were received last summer but these suggest that the feeding range of our gannets is not as great as that given by overseas sources. I will continue the marking programme during the 1980-81 summer and by marking the birds more conspicuously on the upper and lower surfaces of the wings I hope to receive more reports of their movements. About 200 gannets from Bush Island in the Hauraki Gulf will be marked with red dye from August on and I hope to visit Great Barrier Island in October to mark a similar number with green dye.

Anyone seeing coloured gannets should record the date, time, location, weather, number and colour of marked birds and their activity i.e. whether feeding, flying or resting. Please send this information to: Elspeth Waghorn, Zoology Department, Victoria University, Private Bag, Wellington.

Many thanks to Regional Representatives for their support and also to the few successful spotters who sent information last summer.

ELSPETH WAGHORN

Seabirds around Banks Peninsula

Stu Moore and I spent five days (3-7 April 1980) aboard the yacht 'Solveig 1' during part of a Department of Lands and Survey coastal reserves survey of Banks Peninsula. We entered each bay between Port Levy and Kaitoreti Spit as Stu mapped the location of Spotted Shag colonies and tern roosts while I made general observations of seabirds and seals. On the return trip I made 40 ten minute seabird counts. A detailed description of our observations has been submitted to Lands and Survey and the Wildlife Service; the following is a summary of our results.

Spotted Shags and White-fronted Terns were the most common species right around the peninsula, being most common less than 5 km offshore and with a few being present in most of the bays. Spotted Shag colonies were found on cliffs around most of the peninsula, with the greatest concentrations between Peraki and Tumbledown Bays. Terns, Spotted Shags and a few Red-billed Gulls and Black-backed Gulls were found roosting on rocks near headlands of many bays.

Other species found in the various bays included seven Little Shags, two Black Shags and three Reef Herons.

One or two Buller's Mollymawks were seen during most ten minute observation periods. Shy Mollymawks were less

common and a Black-browed Mollymawk was seen twice, as we entered Akaroa Harbour on 4 April and one followed the yacht for two hours while we were about 10 km east of the peninsula on 6 April. During this period Sooty Shearwaters and Cape Pigeons were common and a few Buller's Shearwaters, Fluttering Shearwaters, Fairy(?) Prions, one Diving Petrel and one Northern Giant Petrel were seen. Closer inshore Sooty Shearwaters were less common and a few Cape Pigeons and Northern Giant Petrels were seen.

Several gannets were seen, all within 1 km of the shore. Only a few White-flipped Penguins were seen at sea, but about 50 were seen in Flea Bay one evening where evidence of nesting was found.

The most unusual sighting was a dark skua harassing White-fronted Terns in Okains Bay on 3 April. A positive identification could not be made but it was probably an Arctic Skua.

GRAHAM WILSON

Library donations

Recent additions to the OSNZ library include — *The Kokako*, an extensive bibliography by Sarah S. Poulton; *Birds as Animals* by James Fisher; *Curious Naturalists* by N. Tinbergen; *Birds of Paradise and Bower Birds* by Tom Iredale.

The library is now receiving *Scottish Birds* regularly.

The Society is grateful to the following for donations recently: Messrs R. S. Slack, J. Stanilands, E. G. Turbott and W. H. Way.

ANTHEA GOODWIN

First Black-fronted Dotterel for Central Otago

The confluence of the Clutha and Manuherikia Rivers at Alexandra is a favourite roosting and loafing venue for several species of waterfowl and coastal birds.

When the rivers are low, as is usual during the frosty days of July, there are many exposed shingle-bars, mudbanks, shallow backwaters for bathing, and fringing willows and poplars for cover.

On 19/7/80 there were the usual flocks of Mallard, Grey Duck, hybrids of those two, a few Shoveler, feral geese with a few semi-tame Canada Geese, a Black Swan, about 100 over-wintering Black-billed Gulls and a Spur-winged Plover. Unexpected 'finds' were 7 Australian Coot (frightened out of the willows), the first Pied Stilt of the

season (unusually early — the majority arrive in September) and a flotilla of 35 Grey Teal. These teal also created something of a record, as previously only 2 or 3 have been seen at shooters' ponds in the area.

While we were watching the lone stilt feeding in a shallow backwater a tiny wader appeared close by, picking titbits from the muddy surface on the margin of an island. We raced around to the other side of the river to a closer vantage point where we were able to approach as close as 20 m, and were delighted to identify a Black-fronted Dotterel, the first we know of for Central Otago. The colouring was very distinct, except that the crown was mottled, legs orange and the shoulder blackish rather than chestnut-brown, which suggests that the bird was not quite mature. Perhaps it had ventured inland with the stilt?

PETER and MARGARET CHILD

Banding Liaison Officer

The post of banding liaison officer has been filled by LOU GURR.

Council has created this post with the object of stimulating interest in bird banding and the extraction of information from the scheme's records. It is envisaged that the officer will facilitate the flow of information about banding operations so that the membership at large will know about this aspect of the Society's activities. He can investigate and report on complaints or misunderstandings that arise between members and the banding office and act as a members' advocate when necessary. He is not concerned with the issue of permits to band, bands, or any other routine transactions with the banding office. Continue to communicate directly with the banding office about these matters.

Enquiries to the liaison officer should be addressed to: Mr L. Gurr, 84 Marne Street, Palmerston North.

B. D. BELL and L. GURR

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PAULINE JENKINS reports that after nesting at the Wairau Rivermouth the Royal Spoonbills made their way to a less public spot farther into the lagoon. On 28 May they were seen on the Little Islands near the Boulder Bank by Bill Cash and Pauline. However, by 23 August they had moved back to where they nested last year. The Pied Shags, which have nested there for several years, were in residence and at least three nests were occupied. The Royal Spoonbills did not appear to be either building or nesting at this time.

North with the waders

Who of us, watching godwits in March, has not felt the urge to follow them? Alaska in summer is rewarding, impressive and full of interest; it offers such a wealth of wildlife and majestic scenery that one can finish up in a state of euphoria! In a short article only a few highlights can be mentioned.

I joined an ornithological tour, starting and finishing at Anchorage. It was raining on my arrival but thousands of swallows (Cliff, Tree and Violet-green) flew ceaselessly to and fro over a lake comfortably viewed from a hotel room. The next morning only a handful remained as we made an early start for the flight to Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, via Nome. The plane actually crossed the Arctic circle and landed briefly at Kotzebue — there, a pair of Pintail Ducks were on a small pond — before landing at Nome. From Nome a small plane flies to Gambell. On our first attempt we could not land owing to fog, so stopped between Nome and the airport to look at an old gold dredge around which were Long-tailed Skua, Greater Yellowlegs, Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and Grey-cheeked Thrush. When the fog cleared we took off once more, flying for just over an hour at no higher than 30 m, the occasional seal and walrus could be seen on ice floes in the sea below.

Gambell, which lies on the same longitude as Western Samoa, seems like the end of the earth, a lonely Eskimo village at the tip of a bleak peninsula. Siberia is a mere 60 km to the west; the coast can be seen on a clear day (a very rare occurrence). One of the first birds seen was a Red-necked Stint in some pools by the village. But what a different looking bird it is in full breeding plumage, with rich chestnut colouring right up the sides of the face and around the neck. Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Turnstone, Semipalmated Sandpiper and a stray Killdeer were with the stint. The Killdeer was unusual for Gambell, but this species turns up in all sorts of places all over North America. I have seen them in building lots, botanical gardens and backyards — a most adaptive species. These waders use Gambell as a staging post; they do not stay long so each day the pools are scanned for new arrivals. Walkie-talkies are used to alert the various birding parties. Northern and Red Phalaropes were seen, usually in pairs; these were common elsewhere, particularly around Nome where up to 60 of the Red species were seen on one small tarn.

Coast watching, for as long as one can stand the rain, sleet, wind, freezing

temperature and huddling in the lee of a small iceberg on the beach, provides a continual stream of birds: Puffins (Horned and Tufted), Guillemots, Murres, Auklets and Kittiwakes all the time; Eiders (3 species), Old Squaws, Loons, Cormorants, Sandhill Cranes, Long-tailed, Arctic and Pomarine (paddle shaped tails clearly seen) Skuas came and went; the occasional Grey Whale showed itself. One learned to recognise species by their manner of flight. Flocks of Thick-billed Murres, often led by a Puffin, flew low over the water with constant fast wingbeat. Eiders flew a little higher with purposeful direction and Cormorants higher still in single file while Kittiwakes undulate back and forth undecidedly. Sometimes small icebergs lay close inshore and Guillemots rested in tiers on these while Auklets dived and dodged between the ice. Loons flew past in twos and threes and there were shouts of excitement from us when a Yellow-billed Loon was spotted.

Each day the middens (mostly whale and seal bones) were searched for small passerines which might be sheltering there. Common breeding species in this area are Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting (surely one of the prettiest passerines in its black and white summer plumage) and Hoary Redpoll (a much paler bird than our species). I found a Redpoll nest in dead grass a few cm off the ground; a quick photograph and the bird was back on the nest in less than a minute. Eggs would chill very quickly in that climate.

Not far out of Nome, an old gold-mining town with plenty of character albeit rather tatty and bleak, is Safety Lagoon, an area reminiscent of the main island of the Chathams but rich with breeding waders, ducks, gulls and terns. It is the only known breeding area of Aleutian Tern. Small waders were busily feeding on insects among long grass — a habitat not used by them in N.Z. On the Nome River estuary a Great Knot appeared — at great distance! This was only the fourth record for Alaska. A solitary Short-tailed Shearwater was seen swimming close inshore in the surf; later many more of these old friends were seen in the Bay of Alaska. In the mountains and tundra around Nome we saw a Gyrfalcon being harried by a Long-tailed Skua, several pairs of Short-eared Owls, Willow Ptarmigan (males only, females presumably on nests and well nigh impossible to find because of their excellent camouflage), Rough-legged Buzzards soaring effortlessly above a peak, and Old Squaws, Pintail, Mergansers and Mallard on a semi-frozen lake. In stunted willow a mixture of

warblers and sparrows had me completely bewildered.

Away next to the Pribilofs, islands with a history of Russian exploration and exploitation, and peopled by Aleuts. No sooner had we got off the plane than someone spotted a Grey-crowned Rosy Finch, breeding near sea level here though in other parts of its range in USA it chooses a habitat above 2000 m. The island of St. Paul is really one enormous seal rookery. The seal harvest is strictly controlled and managed; there has been an increase in the seal population since controls were introduced. Visitors may not go into the rookeries, which would be dangerous, but there are hides from which seals can be watched.

For the ornithologist a variety of cliff-nesting birds can be viewed at close quarters. However, photography is fraught with problems such as extremes of light and shade, biting wind, runny nose, hampering layers of clothing and fumbling frozen fingers. I nearly lost my gear with one leg of tripod over the cliff edge! Here were nesting the rare Red-legged Kittiwake (the only known breeding place) in among the more common Black-legged race. Kittiwakes are distinguished from gulls by the triangular black wing tips which look as though they had been neatly dipped in Indian ink. Fulmars were all dark phase, no pale forms here. The rare Red-faced Cormorant nests alongside; this species is found only on the Pribilofs and Aleutians. The first week of June was a little too early for eggs and most birds were preparing nests. The commonest gull is the Glaucous, but mixed with them is the occasional Glaucous-winged; what a confusion of vernacular names! In these two species the dark juveniles of the Glaucous-winged are more easily identified than the adults, which can be difficult. Rock Sandpipers proved confiding little birds; it is the only sandpiper I know with smudgy underparts in breeding plumage. Red-necked Phalaropes chattered away in marshes but never when I had the tape recorder handy. A Snowy Owl, Whimbrel in the grass and arctic foxes lurking among the rocks were further excitements.

Mt. McKinley National Park was a happy contrast with sunshine and rising temperatures, hence alpine flowers were more advanced. We arrived about the same time as the Arctic Warblers; these were plentiful at lower levels in willow, aspen and birch. None had been reported three days earlier. The most impressive birds in the Park were undoubtedly the Golden and Bald Eagles. The Golden Eagle was seen clearly be-

fore it became a striking silhouette with half-closed wings as it stooped, then climbed again in a wonderful display of aerobatics. One of our leaders spotted a nest away on a mountainside crag.

In an area between McKinley and Anchorage are the Cantwell Lakes, where waterfowl are abundant. Here we saw American Wigeon, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Common Merganser. The drumming of Snipe was heard all around but more to wonder at were examples of hybrid Trumpeter x Whistling Swans. This natural hybridising has put the taxonomists in a tizzy! Other highlights of the spruce forest were a Dipper carrying fish to its nest, a Spruce Grouse sitting on its nest while looking exactly like a tree stump and a group of Cliff Swallow's nests under a bridge. A beaver dam and a vanishing otter were a bonus.

From Anchorage to Homer the road winds round the head of Cook Inlet, where lumps of ice can be seen calving off into the glacier lake. At the end of Homer Spit is a restaurant where one can enjoy eating delicious king crab while viewing seals, porpoises, auklets (Ancient and Kittlitz's), Puffins and Bonaparte's and Mew Gulls just outside the windows. On a ferry trip to Kodiak we saw many, many Short-tailed Shearwaters, a few Sooty Shearwaters and Fork-tailed Petrels. Most exciting was a pod of about 30 killer whales, 2 or 3 humpback whales each putting on fantastic tail flourishes before sounding, one fin whale and hundreds of Stellar's sea-lions.

We returned to Anchorage, where the group dispersed but I stayed a further three days, enjoying waders behaving in — to us — a most un-waderlike fashion by perching on trees and fences. On the mudflats I could compare Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated and Least Sandpiper, Bar-tailed and Hudsonian Godwit together with Short-billed Dowitcher which I had learned how to distinguish from the Long-billed.

For a tailpiece and complete contrast, two days in Hawaii found me let loose and camera happy in a Red-footed Booby colony and privileged to go birding in a military area where there were stilts, White-capped Noddies, Night Herons, Wandering Tattler and Sanderling. The Sanderlings were *not* running back and forth in the surf but strangely idling by an inland pool.

A word of warning to would-be travellers in Alaska; it is staggeringly expensive!

SYLVIA REED

PHIL HOWELL and KATHLEEN HARRISON report that for the first time since they began making regular surveys of the Ashley Estuary five years ago, they have failed to find any Bar-tailed Godwits wintering over. Therefore they were pleased when, with PETER WILSON, they found three Bar-tailed Godwits and a Red-necked Stint busily feeding on a mudbank during the afternoon of 29 August. The first of the new season's Wrybills appeared on 14 August. Good numbers of Black-fronted Terns have been present on the Ashley Estuary this winter, with 200-250 being present from April to August. Overall though, bird numbers have been down, despite the relatively mild winter.

Urbanised Spur-winged Plovers

Urban colonisation by Spur-winged Plovers is very much in evidence and we observed a pair incubating on the median strip of the northern motorway, just north of Belfast, near Christchurch. On 19 July we saw one bird sitting on a nest with its mate standing alongside, both were undisturbed by the constant stream of traffic passing on either side. We made a point of checking the birds each time we were in the area and on most occasions one of the birds would be at the nest. When the normal incubation period had elapsed (c.28 days), we took particular note of the birds' activities but there was no sign of the eggs having hatched. This situation has continued up to 29 August, when we made our latest observation. Presumably the eggs are either chilled or infertile, in which case it will be interesting to see how long the birds remain at the nest site.

KATHLEEN HARRISON and
PHIL HOWELL

New Zealand Birds

CHRIS ROBERTSON advises that species for which they have received either no photographs or an inadequate selection so far are (0 = none): Stewart Island Kiwi (0), New Zealand Dabchick (0), Taiko, Black Petrel, Diving Petrel, Reef Heron, all migratory waders (most shots seen are too small, out of focus or grainy. Let us see if people can really see their waders this summer), Pomarine Skua, Arctic Skua, Long-tailed Skua, White-winged Black Tern, Fairy Tern, N.Z. Pigeon, NI & SI Kaka, Kea, Red-crowned Parakeet, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, any cuckoo, N.Z. Kingfisher, NI & SI Rifleman, Hedge Sparrow, N.Z. Pipit, Brown Creeper, Whitehead (0), Yellowhead, Pied Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, NI Robin, Bellbird, Tui, Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting, House Sparrow,

Starling, Indian Myna, Rook (0), White-backed Magpie and Black-backed Magpie.

We hope that some of these species can be represented in the book and that some of our enterprising photographers will fill the gaps in the national coverage.

I extend grateful thanks to all 93 people who have contributed slides for consideration to date.

Slides of any of the species listed above should be sent to MANAGING EDITOR, NEW ZEALAND BIRDS, P.O. BOX 12397, WELLINGTON NORTH.

Remember, each slide must show: Photographer, Name of Bird, and Locality. Please send packets by Registered Post.

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JOHN SEDDON reports that early one May morning a mouse was seen running across a wet lawn toward a small patch of rhubarb. Diving from its perch on a nearby trellis a Kingfisher seized the mouse in its bill, held it briefly and then let it go. The mouse struggled towards the rhubarb while the Kingfisher made four more diving attacks, each time grasping the mouse in its bill and then letting it go. Finally the mouse reached the protection of the rhubarb.

Now the first Kingfisher was chased away by another, which settled on a handy post. In a few minutes, with the slightest movement in the rhubarb, the new Kingfisher dived down and grabbed the dishevelled mouse firmly. The Kingfisher struggled with it a little and let it go again. This was repeated three times until finally the Kingfisher flew off with the mouse, only to drop it dead on the tarseal, while it flew on to a tree nearby without further interest.

Little Spotted Kiwi

I note with interest the report by Derek Onley of Little Spotted Kiwi in the western Paparoas (*OSNZ news* 15). On the night of 19/20 July, while camped in dense silver beech-hard beech-rimu forest between Fossil Creek and Bullock Creek, my wife and I heard what we believe were the calls of Little Spotted Kiwis. Large Grey Kiwis are common around our home at Franz Josef and we are familiar with their call. By contrast the Paparoa kiwi calls were a short, high pitched whistle, identical to Wildlife Service tapes of the Little Spotted Kiwi. The calls were also identical to Little Spotted Kiwis we heard on D'Urville Island.

GERRY McSWEENEY

Otago University research

PHILIP DUNN is completing a study of the feeding ecology of the N.Z. Pigeon, based on field work carried out in the Catlins and Dunedin areas. Aspects of the study include seasonal changes in diet, daily activity patterns and the proportion of the day devoted to feeding.

GRANT GILLESPIE is examining factors affecting Greenfinch damage to a rape seed crop. Field work was carried out in the Oamaru area to assess feeding ecology and damage caused by Greenfinches to a rape seed crop. In addition, experiments were conducted to investigate the birds' daily food requirements. The combined results will enable an economic assessment of damage and control measures to be made.

WAYNE HARRIS is researching the natural history of the S.I. Fernbird in wetland regions near Dunedin. The study is concerned primarily with aspects of habitat selection by the species.

CHRIS LALAS is writing up his thesis on the diet and foraging behaviour of marine shags. This work covers the activity of the shags when they are away from the nest and emphasises the daily food intake.

CARLA McKENZIE is examining the influence of human settlement on the New Zealand avifauna. She discusses Maori and European exploitation and destruction of the environment and the impact of introduced animals on native birds.

RAY PIERCE is writing up his thesis on the comparative ecology of Pied and Black Stilts, particularly with regard to overlap of resource use.

Publications

The influence of song behaviour and breeding success on spacing between nests of the fantail Rhipidura fuliginosa. Ian G. McLean. *Ibis* 122: 98-103. 1980. Breeding Fantails on Cuvier Island had a social system similar to that described for many other small forest flycatchers and their use of song was also similar to that generally described.

Colour marked waders at Werribee. Bird Observer 580. April 1980. From September 1979 to January 1980 the Victoria Wader Study Group marked 800 birds yellow-orange on the underparts. Species were Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Recoveries show little long-distance travel, except for one record of a stint from Adelaide.

The ontogeny and organisation of comfort behaviour in Adelie Penguins. M.

Bekoff, D. G. Ainley and A. Bekoff. *Wilson Bulletin* 91: 255-270. 1979. The development and organisation of comfort movements and activities was studied at Cape Crozier.

Communally breeding Australian birds with an analysis of distributional and environmental factors. Douglas D. Dow. *Emu* 80: 121-140. 1980. The pattern of distribution does not merely reflect that of land birds in general and numbers of species were not strongly associated with particular faunal zones or vegetational types. The Australian Magpies and Purple Swamphen (Pukeko) are of particular N.Z. interest.

The changing numbers of Australasian Gannets on Wellington Harbour, N.Z. H. L. Secker. *Australasian Seabird Group Newsletter* 14. July 1980. The pattern of bird numbers seems to fit the normal dispersal pattern of adults in the non-breeding season.

Ecology of the Little Black Cormorant Phalacrocorax sulcirostris and Little Pied Cormorant P. melanoleucos in New South Wales. II. Proximate control of reproduction. B. Miller. *Australian Wildlife Research* 7. 1980.

Occurrence and distribution of the Mottled Petrel. D. G. Ainiel and Bill Manolis. *Western Birds* 10: 113-123. North Pacific records are summarised, including recent coastal records from British Columbia to California.

Observation on the breeding plumage and prenuptial moult of Dunlins, Calidris alpina, captured in Britain. P. N. Ferns and G. H. Green. *Le Gerfaut* 69: 286-303. 1979.

Distribution of Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis) to the Falkland Islands. I. J. Strange. *Le Gerfaut* 69: 397-410. 1979

Wrybill behaviour

On 28/12/79 I occupied a hide set up in front of a shallow back-water off the Ahuriri River, close to where it flows into Lake Benmore. There was some dry shingle around the shallow water and close by there were extensive areas of exposed subsoil where recent floods had removed vegetation and topsoil. Waders present included two Wrybills in the shallow water and 42 Banded Dotterels spread over the dry shingle and damp subsoil. A little farther away were 15 Spur-winged Plovers, three SIPO and two Pied Stilts.

About the middle of the afternoon there was an alarm scare which put the Spur-winged Plovers, Banded Dotterels, SIPO and Pied Stilts into the air. There was a considerable commotion. Interestingly, the behaviour of the two Wry-

bills during this scare was quite different from that of the other wader species. As soon as the other species flew, the Wrybills quickly crouched between the stones, one bird partly immersing itself in water. While crouching, the grey backs of the Wrybills were virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding greywacke of the riverbed. I did not see what caused the alarm amongst the waders, although it could have been a patrolling Harrier as later I saw the Spur-winged Plovers take to the air when a Harrier flew close.

It is interesting to speculate about the crouching response of Wrybills. The behaviour may be an instinctive reaction to danger — certainly the grey Wrybill sitting next to stones would probably conceal itself from aerial predators. The plumage colour and crouching behaviour would thus represent adaptations to a riverbed habitat. The other waders, e.g. Banded Dotterel and Spur-winged Plover, with their brown backs, presumably could not conceal themselves so easily amongst the grey stones, so they resorted to flight.

LINDSAY DAVIES

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ALLAN CRAGG notes that there was little food available for N.Z. Pigeons in the Franz Joseph area this winter. It was a poor fruiting season for all the podocarps and there were few coprosma berries and seedlings available. Flocks of up to 60 birds were seen feeding on white clover shoots at Waiho Flats during August. Keas have been active in forest down to sea level, these were probably driven down by heavy snowfalls. They ate roots dug out from moss on the forest floor and occasionally earthworms.

Coloured Banded Dotterels

Banded Dotterels are seen regularly throughout Victoria and New South Wales and there are occasional sightings from as far north as Cairns and even one from Fiji.

During winter 1980 members of the Victoria Wader Study Group caught 142 Banded Dotterels during their cannon netting operations. These were banded and dyed yellow on the underparts before release. OSNZ members are urged to look more closely at the dotterels in their area to see whether any of these coloured birds have returned to N.Z. to breed.