

OSNZ news

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

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

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Note Deadline for the September issue
will be 15th August.

20th INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS 1990

Preliminary Notice

The 20th International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch from 2-9 December 1990. The President is Professor Charles G. Sibley (USA) and the Secretary-General is Dr Ben D. Bell (NZ). It is anticipated that the Congress programme will include plenary lectures, symposia, contributed papers (spoken and posters), workshops, discussion groups and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Longer excursions are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand and adjacent regions before and after the congress. Requests for the First Circular and suggestions regarding Congress organisation should be addressed to:

Dr Ben D. Bell,
Secretary-General,
20th International Ornithological Congress,
Department of Zoology,
Victoria University of Wellington,
Private Bag, Wellington

Annual Conference & AMG – Dunedin

The Annual Conference and AMG of the Society was held in Dunedin during the weekend of 22-24 May 1987. This was a 'live-in' conference and all activities associated with the weekend, with the exception of the field trip, were held in the comfortable setting of Knox College. An obvious advantage of this was that it allowed those attending (about 85 members) more time to talk with one another.

Council met on the Friday and dealt with a long and varied agenda. Most of the morning was spent working through the

various committee and Scheme annual reports, most of which appear elsewhere in this newsletter. Probably the most important decision of Council was the commitment to investigate urgently the feasibility of having a paid executive officer, probably based in Wellington. The main advantages to the Society of having a national office would be better publicity, better service to members, better administration of Society affairs, and a higher profile. At recent AGMs there has been a strong call for the Society to develop a higher public profile and gain more publicity. Council see the possible employment of a full-time staff as the best means of achieving these aims.

Regional Representatives met on Friday evening and Saturday morning and Dr Ben Bell and Chris Robertson took the opportunity to summarise the Society's successful bid to host the 20th International Ornithological Congress in NZ during 1990. Some of the planned activities of the Congress were outlined and suggestions made about how OSNZ members could be involved.

The sun shone brightly as 2 bus loads headed out to Otago Peninsula on Saturday. A much-appreciated innovation of this field trip was that it allowed RRs and Council members the opportunity to meet the main party for lunch at Hoopers Inlet and then give their binoculars an airing for the rest of the afternoon. After lunch we moved to Taiaroa Head and spent some time gazing out to sea, trying to identify the large number of mollymawks and other seabirds feeding well off shore. Fortunately several birds obliged us by flying close inshore and the species list included Buller's Mollymawks, Northern Giant Petrel, Gannet, Spotted Shag, and Stewart Island Shag. A few Royal Albatrosses provided tantalising glimpses as they glided by far offshore but then a bird suddenly emerged over the headland and glided only a few metres over our heads - much to the appreciation of everyone. This performance was repeated again before we returned to the buses for the journey to the penguin beach. Having assembled at a convenient vantage point overlooking the beach we were soon

delighted to spot 2 Yellow-eyed Penguins climbing the sand dunes as they headed towards the sanctuary of the coastal vegetation. Soon there were more penguins arriving, and 1 or 2 departing through the gentle surf. It was a contented bunch of bird-watchers which made its way back to cheering warmth of Knox College at the end of the day.

That evening the outside temperature may have been cold but there was plenty of warmth in the vicinity of the bar and later in the dining room for the Annual Dinner. The dinner itself was an excellent repast; during which the guest speaker - Ralph Edwards - gave an enlightening talk about falconry and also displayed a Harrier, which gave a display of its own and almost stole the show as well as the offered meat.

The AGM was held on Sunday morning and in her address the President, Mrs Beth Brown, paid tribute to the many voluntary workers who maintain the activities of the Society. Special mention was made of Peter Gaze, who retired from Council this year. There being no nominations for the vacant position, Council has co-opted Derek Onley for 1 year.

The Falla Memorial Award was presented to Dr P.C. Bull and the A. T. Edgar Junior Award to Peter Langlands and Andrew Crossland.

Finally, the meeting closed with applause for the Dunedin members who had organised such an excellent weekend.

After the AGM the programme continued with 4 talks. John Darby presented us with a review of his long term research on Yellow-eyed Penguins and highlighted the concern for an endemic species whose population has declined drastically since the time of Dr Lance Richdale's pioneer work. Ken Hughey provided a humerous account of Banded Dotterel research and made a plea for members to watch for colour-banded birds. Then Chris Robertson intrigued us with his talk about Wandering Albatrosses, and finally Colin O'Donnell gave an interesting talk about bush birds in South Westland - the results of some intensive surveys of distribution and feeding habits.

there has been a very pleasing increase of interest in nest recording. This year, 58 members of friends contributed 835 cards covering 71 species, bringing the total to 18 350 cards. There were many important contributions to the Scheme this year, particularly from Canterbury region members: Peter Reese recorded 159 nests of 27 species, Don Geddes 80 nests of 31 species, Andrew Crossland 67 nests of 13 species, Colin O'Donnell 66 nests of 27 species and Paul Sagar 55 nests, including 28 Antarctic Tern and 13 Southern Skua nests from the Snares. Other major Canterbury contributions came from Peter Howden (30), Peter Langlands (25), and Michelle Noonan (13). From other parts of the country, Rachel Hamilton sent in 37 cards, including several very detailed records of Goldfinch nests. Peter Bull contributed 35 cards, Jack Cowie 34 cards (including 27 Black-fronted Tern nests), Jim Hamilton (26), Bill Sloan (25), Justin Penney (22), Hugh Robertson (22), Bill Cash (18) and Derek Onley (18). It was particularly pleasing to receive cards for the first time from members such as Robin Guest, Rachel Hamilton, Glen Holmwood, Bill Sloan and David Stone.

35 Colonial Nest Record cards were included this year, covering the following 15 species: Gannet, Black Shag, Pied Shag, Little Shag, Spotted Shag, Royal Spoonbill, Canada Goose, Black Swan, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, White-fronted Tern and Caspian Tern.

My thanks go to all of the contributors to the Scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part. I would also like to thank David Crockett for transferring almost the entire collection of cards to Wellington on his various trips to the capital. I hope that the rest of New Zealand will be able to match the Canterbury contribution next year!

List of contributors: R.B. Abbott, B.J. Alexander, B.D. Bell, M. Bowron, P.C. Bull, W.F. Cash, J.F. Cockrem, E. Coop, J.A. Cowie, N.J. Crockford, A. Crossland, B. Elliott, D.G. Geddes, A. Goodwin, A.G. Grant, D. Grant, G. Grant, G. Guest, R. Guest, R.S. Guest, J.G. Hamilton, R.M. Hamilton, T.R. Harty, J. Hawkins, R.N. Holdaway, G. Holmwood, P.J. Howden, B.R. Keeley, P. Langlands, A. Linores, J. Linscott, O. Linscott, J.L. Lloyd, C.F. McRae, C.M. Miskelly, G. Moon, F. Nieuwland, M. Noonan, C.F.J. O'Donnell, C.C. Ogle, D. Onley, G.R. Parrish, J. Penney, M.H. Powlesland, R.G. Powlesland, P.J. Reese, C. Reid, H.A. Robertson, P.M. Sagar, P. Schweigman, B. Seddon, W.H. Sloan, D. Stone, A. Sturmer, M.J. Taylor, K.V. Todd, E. Woodger, D. York.

List of species recorded during 1986/87: Stewart Island Kiwi 2, Crested Grebe 8, Giant Petrel 2, Gannet 1, Black Shag 1,

Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 1, Spotted Shag 1, White-faced Heron 6, Royal Spoonbill 1, Mute Swan 2, Black Swan 3, Canada Goose 7, Feral Goose 2, Paradise Shelduck 1, Mallard 24, Grey Duck 4, Shoveler 1, Scaup 1, Pheasant 1, Spotless Crake 1, Banded Rail 1, Pukeko 30, Australian Coot 1, SIPO 22, Variable Oystercatcher 10, Spur-winged Plover 16, Banded Dotterel 64, NZ Dotterel 2, Black-fronted Dotterel 2, Wrybill 2, Subantarctic Snipe 5, Pied Stilt 55, Hybrid Black x Pied Stilt 2, Southern Skua 13, Black-backed Gull 21, Red-billed Gull 9, Blacked-billed Gull 4, Black-fronted Tern 32, White-fronted Tern 4, Caspian Tern 1, Antarctic Tern 34, Feral Pigeon 11, Kaka 4, Morepork 1, Little Owl 2, Kingfisher 4, Rifleman 7, Skylark 18, Welcome Swallow 32, Pipit 3, Dunnock 19, Fernbird 5, Yellowhead 1, Grey Warbler 6, Fantail 21, Tomtit 5, Song Thrush 77, Blackbird 85, Silvereye 21, Bellbird 5, Tui 2, Yellowhammer 3, Chaffinch 8, Greenfinch 18, Goldfinch 43, Redpoll 9, House Sparrow 6, Starling 9, Myna 4, White-backed Magpie 4, Rook 1.

HUGH ROBERTSON, *Convener*

(Please note that after this report was completed a further 400+ cards were received from Canterbury members, these will be included in next years report. H.A.R.)

Annual Report of the S.W. Pacific Recording Scheme 1986/87

A number of submissions were received during the year relating to observations made in 4 island groups during the period 1980-1986. These were:

Observer	Island Group	Period
B.R. Keeley	Fiji	Aug/Sept 1980
S. Chambers	New Caledonia	Sept 1984
S. Chambers	Vanuatu	Sept 1984
S. Chambers	Tahiti	Oct 1985
S. Chambers	Fiji	Sept/Oct 1986

J.L. MOORE, *Recorder*

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee 1986/87

During the year a series of 3 articles was published in *OSNZ news* covering the reporting and identification of rare birds in New Zealand. In addition, Barrie Heather discussed related topics with members who attended the Southland Summer Camp and the Hawkes Bay Labour Weekend Camp.

Records received and accepted by the Rare Birds Committee during the past 12 months were:

Gentoo Penguin - 1 at the Snares on 27 and 28/12/85 (R. de Hamel, C. Miskelly, A. Tennyson, P. Johns).

Royal Penguin - Single birds at the Snares from 19 to 25/2/86 (C. Miskelly, A. Tennyson, R. de Hamel) and Katikati Point, Moeraki on 17 & 18/3/86 (R. Jones). Both birds were photographed.

Juan Fernandez Petrel - 1 briefly seen and heard at South East Island, the Chathams, on 24/3/86 is the second record of this species in New Zealand (M.J. Imber).

Wilson's Storm Petrel - 1 seen between Little and Great Barrier Islands on 28/5/86 (P. Battley).

Lesser Frigatebird - 1 found dead at Motuara Island on 28/1/87 (T. Harty).

Intermediate Egret - 1 photographed at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 5 & 7/5/86 (P.J. Reese) may have been the same bird seen at Lake Ellesmere on 2/8/86 (C. O'Donnell). 1 at Kaikohe S.F. from 25/5/86 to 2/6/86 (G. Watola, P. Miller).

Cape Barren Goose - 1 was seen at Whitford on 11/2/86 but it is not certain that the bird was of wild origin (A. Goodwin).

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck - This species is on the rare bird list but only one description was received by the Committee. A male in eclipse plumage at Lake Half, Pukanui on 26/1/86 (B. Brown).

Wood Duck - 1 present on the Snares from 14/11/85 until 6/3/86 and was presumed to be the same bird that was recorded there in 1982/83 and 1984/85 (C. Miskelly, P.M. Sagar).

Nankeen Kestrel - A bird photographed at Te Mata Peak, Havelock North on 9/5/86 and 14/6/86 was either a female or and immature (R.H. Winters, R.E. Wheeldon, K.V. Todd).

Black-tailed Native Hen - 1 seen at Opuatia Swamp on 16/5/86 (P. Walter).

Painted Snipe - A male was seen at Lake Ellesmere on 6/8/86 and is the first record for New Zealand (K. Harrison, S. Mulligan, P. Leech, P. Mercer). If we designated a 'Bird of the Year' this record would surely get it.

Mongolian Dotterel - 1 at the Parangahau Estuary on 8/3/86, 21/6/86 & 22/6/86 (R. & B. Heather, H.A. Robertson). 1 at Lake Ellsmere from 7 to 12/8/86 (T. Meis *et al.*).

Hudsonian Godwit - 1 at Jordan's Farm, Kaipara on 4/10/86 (A. Riegen, S. Davies).

Japanese Snipe - A *Gallinago* sp. seen at the Snares from 12 to 14/11/85 was presumed to be this species (C. Miskelly, P.M. Sagar).

Long-tailed Skua - 1 at Foxton Beach on 8/4/85 (J.L. & M. Moore).

Gull-billed Tern - Birds were seen at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 4 & 5/7/86 (K. Harrison, P. & J. Sagar, J. & J. Fennell) and at Taradale, Hawkes Bay, also on 4/7/86 (K.V. Todd).

Arctic Tern - 1 at Foxton Beach on 15 & 16/11/86 (J.L. Moore, M. Wenham).

Sooty Tern - At least 13 birds were seen in 2 flocks at Pakiri Beach on 27/7/86 (F.J. Taylor).

... and the list ends as it started, with another good record from the Snares.

Oriental Cuckoo - 1 at Boat Harbour, the Snares, on 10/12/86 (A. Tennyson, C. Miskelly).

J.F.M. FENNEL, *Secretary*

Checklist Committee Report 1987

The preparation of drafts has continued - the total of species covered has now passed the halfway mark. The continued contribution of Rank Xerox (NZ) Ltd in photocopying drafts for circulation free of charge has again been appreciated.

A list of the present membership of the Committee may be helpful in view of several changes since its appointment. Members at present are: E.G. Turbott (convener), J.A. Bartle, D.H. Brathwaite, Dr B.J. Gill, Dr M.J. Imber, Dr P.R. Millener, R.J. Scarlett, R.B. Sibson, Dr J. Warham, Dr P.C. Bull (co-opted).

E.G. TURBOTT, *Convener*

Library Report - 1987

Once again the journals and newsletters have been the mainstay of library, 43 being circulated to 44 members. Ecology Division, DSIR, receives 15 of the publications circulated. During the year we received 35 interloan requests and several enquiries from the public. Borrowing by members has been low with only 24 items being used. Our collection of books has not been well used, which is a pity as we have added some fine books to the collection through the generosity of the following - Beth Brown, John Brown, David Crockett, Barrie Heather, Paul Sagar, Betty Seddon, Dick Sibson, Michael Taylor, and Graham Turbott. Margaret Child also donated important archival material.

None of our work would have been possible without the generosity of the Director and Council of the Auckland War Memorial Museum and the kind help of Ian Thwaites and his staff.

ANTHEA GOODWIN, *Hon. Librarian*

Banding Liaison Officer - 1987

Only 2 requests for my services were made by members in the past year. One was to report sightings of banded birds and to request information on same. This was forwarded to the Banding Office for routine attention. The other, however, on behalf of 3 members of the Society raised very important considerations of fundamental concern to serious banders and indeed to the working of the Banding Scheme. It was mainly concerned with access to recoveries and entitlement to use of this information. It contained very responsible, timely and pertinent comment and suggestions. This was forwarded to the Banding Officer with a supporting letter, after first discussing it with him.

Now that the Banding Office comes under the direction of the newly constituted Department of Conservation I considered it appropriate to discuss the question of

liaison with the newly appointed Director, Science and Research. The upshot was a formal written request to the Department that OSNZ should be represented on a committee to consider banding. The justification for such representation was made on the ground that, OSNZ members as banders and users of the scheme are vitally concerned with its working. In particular, those who undertake special studies are not happy with the present arrangement for access to recoveries and use in publications. This has been cause for recurring contention.

I suggested that the Society's Banding Liaison Officer and 1 or more other members as considered appropriate could make a useful contribution to the overall working of such a committee. It certainly would help to satisfy the feeling of a considerable body of members who band birds to have some say in the outcome of their efforts. Moreover, it would ensure that the Liaison Officer was better informed about the working of the scheme and could more intelligently represent the Society.

I find it satisfying that some members have made the effort to present such a responsible and positively presented case for improvement to the Banding Scheme. It makes one feel that the office is justified by the quality, if not the volume, of its usage.

L. GURR, *Banding Liaison Officer*

Membership of OSNZ

Committees

Checklist: E.G. Turbott (convener), J.A. Bartle, D.H. Brathwaite, Dr B.J. Gill, Dr M.J. Imber, Dr P.R. Millener, R.J. Scarlett, R.B. Sibson, Dr J. Warham, Dr P.C. Bull.

Rare Birds: John Fennell (Secretary), Dr Ben Bell, Brian Bell, Barrie Heather, Paul Sagar, Dick Sibson.

The President is an *ex officio* member of all committees. The conveners of the Society's permanent schemes are listed on the inside front cover of *Notornis*.

Robert Falla Memorial Award

At the AGM in Dunedin the President, Mrs Beth Brown, announced that the recipient of the Robert Falla Memorial Award for 1986 was Dr P.C. Bull. This announcement was greeted with prolonged applause.

The basic criteria for the award are valuable contributions to the study of birds in NZ, together with sustained service to OSNZ. Council believes that Dr Bull meets both of these requirements to an exceptionally high standard.

Peter Bull's records from Manukau Harbour began in the early Annual Reports (1939-40) and subsequent publications of the Society include articles on Red-billed Gull movements and censuses on the west coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, Silvereyes, the first NZ records of

Pterodroma leucoptera, and Gannet census contributions.

Peter was appointed to the staff of DSIR and assisted Count Dr K.A. Wodzicki in work on introduced mammals and research on the rabbit, including its parasites (which earned a D.Sc.), but his interest in birds continued. He investigated the mainland Sooty Shearwater colony on the Wellington Coast between Makara and Titahi Bay. In 1953 he published on marked Blackbirds (a study at Lower Hutt that he continued for many years) and in 1955 compiled the annual ringing report. In 1956 he was elected North Island Vice President and served as President from May 1957 until 1960. While President, he revived the Beach Patrol Scheme (which became a permanent OSNZ activity) and published (with B.W. Boesen) a preliminary analysis of storm-killed birds 1939-59 and a further analysis of the 1961 results. Peter had always taken an interest in the OSNZ banding scheme and when this was taken over by the Dominion Museum he and A. Blackburn were OSNZ representatives on the advisory committee. His interest in introduced birds, encouraged by his Blackbird study at Lower Hutt, was extended when he became responsible for research of their economic impact on orchards and horticulture. Papers on the Rook were published in 1957 and 1975.

After a 7 year spell following his Presidency, Peter Bull accepted appointment as Council member in 1967. Having recruited him, his colleagues would not let him retire - he remained on the Council until 1972-73 and was re-elected for a further term in 1974-86.

During this period his work at Ecology Division became more ornithological. He published (with D.G. Dawson) on the mortality of birds during the Canterbury snowstorm of November 1967. In 1968, he suggested a bird distribution study based on species lists from the 10 000 yard grid squares, and in 1970 published an account of this new mapping scheme. Most NZ ornithologists will know how this scheme developed after some years of annual reporting by Bull and Gaze, into the Bird Atlas, first published as a provisional edition (1978) and later (1985) in its definitive form by Bull, Gaze and Robertson. His papers in the 1970s were related to this project and to the subject of bird census on native forests.

The knowledge gained in work on introduced birds is summarised in Bull's contribution to the Readers Digest *Complete Book of New Zealand Birds* (1985). These are the definitive accounts of Skylark, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow, Starling, Myna, Australian Magpie, and Rook in New Zealand.

C.A. FLEMING & R.S. SLACK