



OSNZ news

No.47

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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.

Note Deadline for the September issue
will be 21st August, 1988.

Editorial

Members will have noticed some new features in recent issues of *OSNZ news*. These include a photograph and short account of some of the Society's office holders and the use of photographs to illustrate and add interest to articles.

Further changes are planned. At its May meeting Council approved the recommendation that a 12-page issue of *OSNZ news* may be produced when sufficient material is available. In addition, there is to be a new regular feature in the form of a rarities report, compiled by Derek Onley. Details of the latter were discussed with RRs in May. Other regular features are planned and these will be announced once details are finalised.

The impetus for these changes came from members responses to the questionnaire sent out last year. The success or otherwise of these changes now depends upon you. My job is to edit and collate each issue of *OSNZ news*, not to write it. Consequently if there are to be any 12-page issues I need to receive more contributions from members, so do not sit back and expect the other person to write something - do it yourself. Now I will look forward to a mailbox bulging with accounts of your activities, observations, comments etc. And please don't forget that suitable photographs and other illustrations with such articles are also welcome. Black and white prints produce the best results but colour prints are usually equally acceptable.

PAUL SAGAR, *Editor*

Taiko burrow discovered

After a decade of research in the south western area of the main Chatham Island the first burrow of the Taiko (*Pterodroma magentae*) has been located.

A radio telemetric tracking system assisted in pin-pointing the burrow site during the latest in a series of Chatham Island Taiko expeditions.

This particular phase was a joint venture between the Taiko Research Project team, led by David Crockett, and the Department of Conservation team under the leadership of Michael Imber.

Monitoring stations were set up at 6 sites, including a mobile station of Gerry Clark's yacht *Totorore*.

Ten further Taiko were banded this season bringing the total number to 40 individual birds banded. Transmitters were attached to the two central tail feathers of 10 Taiko and these birds were tracked for the following 3 months.

The first burrow was found on 6 November 1987 and a Taiko was observed at the mouth of the burrow on 23 November, thus confirming this long-awaited event.

This discovery is a major breakthrough and the information gained will greatly assist in the location of further burrows.

My sincere thanks to all expedition personnel, landowners, and members of the Chatham Island community for their generous support.

DAVID E. CROCKETT, *Expedition Leader*



David Crockett examines the recently discovered Taiko burrow.

Little Owl 1, Kingfisher 1, Rifleman 4, Skylark 13, Welcome Swallow 19, Pipit 2, Dunnock 2, Fernbird 1, Grey Warbler 1, Fantail 74, Tomtit 6, Song Thrush 23, Blackbird 28, Silvereve 5, Bellbird 4, Yellowhammer 2, Cirl Bunting 3, Chaffinch 7, Greenfinch 4, Goldfinch 7, Redpoll 8, House Sparrow 3, Starling 9, White-backed Magpie 4, Rook 1.

HUGH ROBERTSON, *Convener*

(Please note that after this report was completed a further batch of cards was received from Canterbury members, these will be included in next year's report. H.A.R.)

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee 1987/88

I took over from John Fennell in September 1987. Since then the following submissions have been accepted by the Rare Birds Committee.

Barn Owl - 1 at Hokitika in May 1987 (J.L. Mathieson)

Brown Teal - 1 at Lake Rotorua on 13/3/87 (J.L. Moore).

Greenshank - Campbell Island, January - February 1978 (P.A. Mallinson).

Lesser Knot - Campbell Island, November 1978 to January 1979 (P.A. Mallinson).

Oriental Dotterel - 1 at Greymouth Airport, 24 & 26/10/87 (C.S. Lauder).

Lesser Yellowlegs - 1 at the Mangere Sewage Ponds, 30/10 to 27/11/87 (R.B. Sibson *et al.*).

Great Knot - 1 at the Manawatu Estuary, 27 & 28/12/87 (J.L. & M. Moore).

Common Tern - 1 at Manawatu Estuary, 25/12/87 to 17/1/88 (J.L. & M. Moore).

Arctic Tern - 2 at the Snares, 14-15/11/87 (P.M. Sagar & C.M. Miskelly).

Spine-tailed Swift - 2 sightings, at Greymouth on 20/4/87 and at 12-mile Bluff on 7/5/87 (C.S. Lauder).

M.J. IMBER, *Secretary*

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer 1987-88

Overview of the Society's major national schemes

Good progress has been made on the computerisation of the Beach Patrol and Nest Record Schemes, but no progress was made on computerising the Moulting Scheme this year. Chris Petyt, a member formerly from Nelson, was employed on NZ Lottery Board and Projects Assistance Fund grants to code all the Blackbird and Song Thrush nest record cards onto data sheets ready for inputting into the computer, and to enter further Beach Patrol records onto the computer.

Ralph Powlesland, who supervised the work of Christine Reed last year and Chris Petyt this year, has advised that the fund of \$15 000 has been used up. The task of completing the input of the remaining

Beach Patrol cards is of top priority, so that Ralph can write a detailed review article about the Beach Patrol Scheme for the 50th Anniversary publication.

Review of the Society's special national studies

1) **Cattle Egret**: The annual Cattle Egret survey was again completed in August; Barrie Heather reports that numbers were well up in some regions, but down in others. Unfortunately some regions were not covered in 1987. It appears that very few Cattle Egrets over-summered in NZ, and none bred. Early indications from autumn 1988 are that numbers are well down, perhaps as a consequence of recent heavy rainfalls in northern, central and eastern Australia creating good habitat for the birds compared with an average year. The 1988 national survey will be done in August, preferably in the second half of the month.

2) **Banded Dotterel**: This study continues to progress very well due to the dynamic leadership of Ray Pierce. Regular newsletters are produced for members of the Banded Dotterel Study Group which up-date results and encourage further efforts. Ray had an extremely successful trip to Tasmania and Victoria, largely funded by a Projects Assistance grant. He saw about 3000 Banded Dotterels, checked 2020, and found 30 with NZ bands, all from the southern-central South Island. This brought the number of Australian records from autumn and early winter to 90. Later records are still awaited. Ray Pierce and Clive Minton (Victoria Wader Study Group) plan to publish their results on trans-Tasman migration of Banded Dotterels in *Notornis*.

Over 500 New Zealand-banded birds were seen within New Zealand last autumn and winter, and a further c500 birds were colour-banded during the 1987/88 summer. Much of the banding effort this season was in Southland, the Lake Ellesmere area, and in the North Island, particularly in the Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay and Volcanic Plateau.

This coming season, Ray hopes that colour-banding coverage will include East Cape, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Rangipo, Manawatu and Marlborough areas, as well as some of those covered already.

Ray has agreed to co-ordinate the Black-fronted Dotterel study that was proposed last year (see *OSNZ news* 44). He has applied for a group colour-banding permit and is currently awaiting a reply from the Banding Office. It is likely that this extra study should get off the ground in spring 1988.

3) **Little Shags**: This study has been launched successfully, with recording sheets being sent to all RRs earlier this

year. Publicity for the project was also provided in *OSNZ news* 46 (March 1988). Many members have already been involved in special field trips to learn and record the various plumage phases of Little Shags.

4) **Migration of passerines**: Derek Onley reported a poor response to his request in *OSNZ news* 42 for migration watchers, and this scheme has been republicised in *OSNZ news* 46, hopefully with a better response.

The other half of this study was 'launched' successfully at the Farewell Spit study course, where 160 passerines of 12 species were caught and banded during a two week period over the New Year. In autumn, a major banding effort was made at Jack Taylor's farm near Ward, Marlborough. About 60 members from 5 regions took part in one or more of the 8 weekend workshops that were run by Brian Bell, Ralph Powlesland, Hugh Robertson and Paul Sagar. Over 700 passerines of 15 species were banded, measured and had their moult scored. Plans are underway to set up some banding stations on the Wellington West coast to band more birds and hopefully catch some from the South Island.

5) **Red-billed Gulls**: Jim Mills reports that there has been an increase in the reporting rate of band combinations this year, and the data are proving to be very valuable. The breeding season this summer was very unusual in that the Red-billed Gulls at the Kaikoura colony, and apparently at other central New Zealand sites, were spectacularly unsuccessful, perhaps as a result of a change in sea-current patterns. Whether this unusual season will effect movement patterns is not yet known.

Register of OSNZ projects

I wrote to all RRs asking for lists of local projects and individual projects. There was a very good response from some regions, but nothing from many regions.

Advice on projects

I have given advice on the 5 projects for which requests were received: Plumage forms of Little Shags - M.J. Taylor; Otago Harbour bird survey - P. Schweigman; Welcome Swallow survey in Otago - P. Schweigman; New Zealand Dotterel study north of Auckland - J. Dowding; Royal Spoonbill colour-banding - J. Hawkins.

New studies

I have received suggestions for 2 new schemes: (1) Regular backyard or very localised bird counts - P. Gaze. (2) Annual cycle of calls/song of New Zealand birds - J.A. Gibb. These proposals will be circulated to RRs and then be discussed at the November Council meeting.