

**Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) at Lake Ellesmere**

After controls to the water level and a period of low rainfall in Canterbury, many of the areas of Lake Ellesmere favoured by migrant and local waders had dried up by January 1985. The waders therefore moved to new feeding areas.

An area of ideal mudflat was located by KCH in company with Shiela Petch and Peter Wilson at the mouth of the L II River.

During a visit there on 10 January, they noted an unfamiliar wader with a resting flock of Knot (*Calidris canutus*). The bird was larger than the Knot and its plumage on the back was more boldly marked. Although it occasionally lifted its head from the resting position, the observers could not see the bird well enough for a full description to be made. As the observers approached, the flock took flight, too far away for the wing and tail pattern to be seen.

The bird was later found feeding with a mixed flock of Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit and Pied Stilt. It was approached to within 20 metres and further details of plumage and behaviour were noted.

The bird was provisionally identified as a Ruff or Reeve.

On 20 January, JFMF and JSF found it at the same place again in a group of 26 Knot. It was approached to within 50 metres and the species identification was confirmed, the observers being previously familiar with the species.

The bird was estimated to be 4-5 cm taller than the Knot with it. Its general shape was more elongated, and it had a longer neck. Its plumage was buffish brown and grey brown compared with the general grey of the Knot.

The crown was finely streaked, but the feathers just over the bill, on the cheeks and on the neck were buff and unstreaked. The back feathers were brown with broad light margins, giving a bold scaly appearance. The underparts were buffish with white on the belly and undertail, but the breast had extensive scalloping of light brown.

The tail was dark with white patches on either side of the tail coverts.

In flight, the white patches were noticeable and separated by a central dark stripe. The wings were brown with a narrow pale wingbar. The secondaries were paler brown than the greater coverts and primaries, resulting in a noticeable lighter trailing edge to the wing.

The bill was the same length as the head and downcurved very slightly at the tip. The bill was dark but appeared to have some pinkish brown at the base. The legs were longer than those of the Knot and were yellowish.

It fed quite differently from the Knots, moving quickly and darting at food items on the surface of the mud. During the period of observation, it did not feed by probing and was not heard to call. Occasionally, it ran at the Knots in turn, showing mild aggression. The Knots moved aside but otherwise took little notice. On several occasions the bird made fluttering leaps of about 30 cm into the air.

The Ruff is sexually dimorphic for size. Cramp & Simmons (1983) quote the size range for male Ruff as 26-30 cm, whereas the female Reeve is smaller with a range of 20-24 cm. The Knot has a size range of 23-25 cm.

As this bird was larger than the Knot, we believe that it was a male.

This record, which was accepted by the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee, is the first positive record for New Zealand. The first possible record was of a bird at the Manukau Harbour in April 1964 (Mackenzie & McKenzie) but this was only admitted to the Suspense List in the New Zealand checklist (OSNZ 1970).

We later learned that this bird had been seen nearby by Colin O'Donnell on 30 December 1984, which would be the first actual sighting. On 14 January, two birds, possibly a Ruff and a Reeve, were seen by Ken Hughey but since then only single birds have been seen.

The Ruff has occurred in Australia in most summers since 1962 but from widely scattered localities (Blakers *et al.* 1984).

This recent sighting confirms the addition of Ruff to the New Zealand list.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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### Some foods of Hutton's Shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*)

Hutton's Shearwaters (*Puffinus huttoni*) breed on steep, tussock-covered slopes of the Seaward Kaikoura Mountains (42° 15'S, 173° 38'W) in the north-east of the South Island (Harrow 1965). They migrate to seas off the north-west coast of Australia during autumn (Halse 1981).

Little is known about the foods of this species. Harrow (1976) reported that Kaikoura residents saw up to 20 000 in the bay on 20 and 21 September 1967 feeding on "shoals of unidentified silver fish about 35-40 mm long". Tarburton (1981) examined nine drowned on 28 August 1980: all had stomachs full of very small fish, one shearwater (fresh weight 466.5 g) having 42.5 g of stomach contents.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for this note are from 25 shearwaters drowned in nets at South Bay, Kaikoura, on 20 October 1984. The collector, D.W. Tattle of the University of Canterbury, reported that many thousands of shearwaters were feeding in the bay and numerous small nekton were visible in the calm water. A net of 108-mm mesh set by a local fisherman ensnared at least 50 Hutton's Shearwaters. Although the net was probably set overnight, the birds were