



# 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 12th August.

## Annual Conference & AGM – Wellington

The Annual Conference and AGM of the Society was held in Wellington on 23-25 May 1986. For me a highlight of the weekend was the obvious depth of enthusiasm among members.

Council met on the Friday and worked through a long and varied agenda. Most of the morning was spent working through the committee and scheme annual reports. Most of these appear elsewhere in this newsletter. A considerable amount of time was spent discussing means to increase the membership of the Society. An increase in membership is seen as essential if OSNZ is to maintain its role in promoting ornithology in New Zealand. In addition, an increase in membership would assist with maintaining the costs associated with the Society's activities. The Society's application to host the 20th International Ornithological Congress (IOC) in 1990 was discussed enthusiastically – if NZ is successful with its bid then the next few years would be a very exciting time for NZ ornithology. A loan of \$10,000 from the Projects Assistance Fund was made for promotion of NZ's case in Ottawa, where the IOC organising committee are meeting during June 1986. Among other business the Projects Assistance Fund warranted special attention. Funds were made available to: Alison Davis, for her study of Shore Plovers; Drs Rod Hay and Hugh Robertson, for their proposed study of the endangered Rarotongan Flycatcher; and Ducks Unlimited for their proposed facilities at the Sinclair Wetland in Otago.

Regional Representatives met on Friday evening and again on Saturday morning. There was an excellent attendance with all but one region being represented. There was much discussion about bird recording in New Zealand and this was followed by even more discussion about means to attract members. Beth Brown reviewed the points raised at the Council meeting and asked RRs to search for a member who could be OSNZ's public relations and promotions person. Following the meeting there was a substantial lunch – which was much appreciated – before RRs and Council members travelled to the Natural

History Unit of the National Museum. Here Sandy Bartle, the museum's ornithologist, gave us an enthusiastic and informative tour of the bird rooms. This included a summary of the organisation of the collections and how ornithologists – both amateurs and professionals – may make use of them. It wasn't long before cabinet doors were opened and specimens were being examined. Isn't it much easier to separate Arctic, Common and Antarctic Terns when specimens of all three species can be compared in the hand!

Those not attending the RRs meeting were able to visit Kapiti Island or the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre.

The AGM was held in the Royal Society rooms and was attended by about 90 members. The President, Mrs Beth Brown briefly reviewed the Society's activities over the past year and paid tribute to the many voluntary workers who maintain the activities of the Society. Special mention was made of Dr Peter Bull, who retired from Council this year after many years service to the Society, which included the organisation of the bird mapping scheme and the production of the Atlas. Members' support of this tribute was shown by prolonged applause. The Falla Memorial Award was conferred posthumously to Peter Child of Alexandra for his contributions to ornithology in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands and to the Society. The motion to make Mr. R. B. Sibson an Honorary Life Member of the Society was passed unanimously.

Brian Bell, Hugh Robertson and Paul Sagar were elected to Council. Under items of general business several members made constructive comments and suggestions about promotion of the Society and ways of increasing membership. The AGM ended in plenty of time for a happy hour before dinner. After dinner Sir Charles Fleming addressed the meeting and summarised the ornithological achievements of past presidents of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In this he was aided by the large range of portraits which decorated the walls. Obviously ornithology played an important role in the early development of science in NZ. After adjourning from the Royal Society rooms some of the less formal activities of the weekend continued until the small hours – did I even hear mention of Morris dancing?

On Sunday the programme continued with 8 short talks about current projects which are investigating endangered species. Ralph Powlesland reviewed the status of Kakapo and raised optimism about the success of liberating birds on Little Barrier Island. Graeme Elliott then reviewed some aspects of his field study of Yellowheads. This was followed by Don Merton's review of the status of Black Stilts (not very good without continued management of the remaining population) and Brian Bell's review of the Takahe (recent management gives good grounds for optimism). Jim Jolly reviewed his study of Little Spotted Kiwis with particular emphasis on population size, breeding success and possibilities for island transfers. This was followed by Duncan Cunningham's intriguing story of the decline of the Rockhopper Penguin population on Campbell Island and the search for possible causes. While the growth rate of chicks appears to be all right there is real concern about chick mortalities caused by rats and plague. I'm sure that we will hear a lot more about this study. Mike Imber reviewed the search for the breeding grounds of the Chatham Island Taiko and suggested that islands off Pitt Island may be the best localities for future searches. Finally, Don Merton brought us up-to-date with the Black Robins. There were 26 birds at the start of last season. These comprised 7 pairs, of which 5 bred and produced 34 eggs; 24 of these eggs hatched and 18 chicks fledged but there was unprecedented mortality of young after fledging and only 9 survived to reach independence. The total population now is about 35 birds.

After another substantial lunch we were treated to a sneak preview of the latest TVNZ production 'Beyond the Roaring Forties' which examined NZ's subantarctic islands – there is some excellent footage in this. Thanks to Gavin Woodward for arranging for us to view this fine film.

The meeting closed with a well-deserved vote of thanks to Russell Thomas and his committee for organising such an enjoyable weekend. The 1987 Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Dunedin. See you there.

PAUL SAGAR

## Moult Recording Scheme – Annual Report 1986

Records continue to be received, though at a relatively slow rate. The new design of moult card – used during the moult recording exercise at Hamilton last May – has been sent to several observers for field evaluation.

Christine Reed is due to work on the existing moult data later this year, and so final printing of the card has been delayed, since her computer analysis may result in further changes in its scope and design. By using the IBM 4341 computer at Victoria University it is hoped to have most, if not all of the moult data transferred from cards and sheets by the end of 1986.

The printing of the new cards should be in late 1986, and so they will be ready for the 1987 annual 'moult season'.

BEN D. BELL, *Convener*

## Annual Report of the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee

More reports of rare birds were received during 1985/86 than in the previous year. This may be due, in part, to a greater awareness of the rare bird reporting procedures. The committee has recently produced a list of species for which descriptions are requested before the acceptance of records. This list has been distributed widely and was published in *OSNZ news* 38.

There is concern that records not submitted through the Rare Birds Committee may still be published in Society reports. If unverified reports are further quoted this could lead to the continued publication of mistakes.

The records accepted by the committee during the past 12 months were:

**Chinstrap Penguin** – One photographed on Campbell Island on 14/3/84 (G. Harper).

**Providence Petrel** – A beach wrecked specimen was found at Omamari, Northland, on 22/9/84 (P. Miller).

**White-necked Petrel** – One dead at Karikari Bay on 27/1/86 (J. Dowding, G. Arnold, J. Macefield).

**Gould's Petrel** – One dead at Marokapa Beach on 13/1/85 (J. & A. Rowe).

**Manx Shearwater** – One found dead on Waikanae Beach on 25/1/85 was considered to be of British origin (A. Tennyson).

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** – One dead near Tikonui Stream, Northland, on 14/4/84 (P. & K. Miller).

**Brown Booby** – Two at Little Huia in August and 1 there on 8 & 12 October 1985 (C. Smuts-Kennedy, B. Green).

**Intermediate Egret** – One at Ohinewai on 24-31/8/85 (B. Seddon, B. Brown *et al.*).

**Nankeen Night Heron** – One seen in Queen Charlotte Sound 12-17/5/85 may have been

an escapee from Wellington Zoo but no bands were seen (C. Robertson).

**Nankeen Kestrel** – A female was seen at Tiwai Point on 28/7/85 (C. Miskelly, W. Cooper). One at South Brighton, Christchurch on 25/10/85 (D. Stewart).

**Asiatic Dowitcher** – This species was added to the NZ list when I was seen at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary from 29/8/85 to 6/9/85 (A. Crossland, P. Langlands, J. & J. Fennell).

**Marsh Sandpiper** – Singles at Awarua Bay on 2/12/84 and Waituna Lagoon on 3/12/84 (K. & J. Morrison, W. Cooper).

**Ruff** – One at Lake George, Southland, from 9/12/84 to 16/3/85 (W. Cooper, C. Miskelly). One in Hawkes Bay area in November 1985 (R. Parrish *et al.*).

**Japanese Snipe** – One at Mangere Ponds on 13 & 14/10/85 (D. Baker, R. Child, S. Davies). Two at Lake George on 22/3/85, where at least one had been present since December 1984, were probably of this species (W. Cooper, C. Miskelly).

**Great Knot** – One seen and photographed at the Wanganui Estuary on 1/2/86 (P. Battley, O. Torr).

**Western Sandpiper** – One at Access Bay on 29/11/84 (B. Brown).

**Red-necked Phalarope** – A bird was seen at Mangere Ponds on 6-10/6/85 (R. B. Sibson).

**Oriental Pratincole** – One flew over Jordan's Farm, Kaipara Harbour, on 30/11/85 (D. Booth, S. Chamberlain, B. Searle, C. Exley).

**Long-tailed Skua** – Two birds were identified at sea 45°S, 175°W on 11/3/85 and 12/3/85 (C. Robertson, B. Bell).

**White-winged Black Tern** – One at Karaka on 9/2/85 (S. Davies, A. Riegen).

**Gull-billed Tern** – A bird was present at the Wanganui Estuary for most of December 1985 (P. Battley, G. Randle).

**Crested Tern** – A bird was seen at Kaikoura on 24/5/85 (G. Wilson).

**Arctic Tern** – One was photographed at Bowentown on 20/1/85 (B. Chudleigh).

**Tree Martin** – This species probably bred at Outram, Otago, as young birds were seen from January to March 1984 (A. Neville).

J. F. M. FENNELL, *Secretary*

## Checklist Committee Report 1986

The committee has continued with the preparation and circulation of first drafts. This work, which requires the entering of drafts on the word processor at the Auckland Museum, has been greatly assisted by sponsorship provided by Rank Xerox (NZ) Ltd: in addition to photocopying drafts free of charge, the firm has made a grant of \$500 towards the cost of employing a word processor operator. The committee is most grateful to Dr Brian Gill for approaching Rank Xerox for sponsorship; in addition, Dr Gill has continued to supervise the entering of drafts on the word processor.

E. G. TURBOTT, *Convener*

## Library Report - 1986

Work this year has centred around the journal circulation scheme, with 38 members now reading up to 19 titles. Servicing interloan requests has been made easier by more efficient organisation on the new shelving in the Periodicals Room of the Auckland Institute & Museum library.

Interloan requests and borrowing by members are slightly down on last year but there have been more requests for information and I thank Ian Thwaites and his staff for helping to answer some of these.

20 new books and 57 reprints and pamphlets were added to our collection and we are grateful to the following donors – B. D. Heather, R. B. Sibson, E. G. Turbott, and Dr M. J. Taylor.

ANTHEA GOODWIN, *Librarian*

## Banding Liaison Officer - Annual Report 1986

During the year I have not received any requests for my services. I enquired of the Banding Officer whether he had any queries or complaints from members. Only one query concerning procedure was received by him and this he assures me was resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. In this instance the member did not deem it necessary to involve me in the discussion.

The Council's decision to list the post and name of the office holder on the front cover of *Notornis* to make known the service offered I consider to be worthwhile and may well generate better liaison with the Banding Office for members.

With regards to both matters of concern to the Council mentioned in my reports of 1983 and 1985: –

- (a) duplication of early banding records;
- (b) computerisation of records, and progress towards establishment of a ready retrieval system.

(a) still remains low on the priority for alteration - owing to pressure of other work. (b) all records (except banders' own recoveries) are up to date and entered into the computer. This means that retrievals, on request, (assuming that formalities of consent of banders are in order, and that costs are met by the user of the system) are now available.

The absence of complaints from members leads one to conclude that the banding service continues to satisfy the needs of members. The liaison office is still there to facilitate change or make representation on members' behalf should it become necessary from time to time.

L. GURR, *Banding Liaison Officer*