

sandpipers have stronger streaking, but there is overlap. The middle toe appears longer than the bill in long-toed stint, but the same length as the bill in least sandpiper. The long-toed stint has a longer tarsus than the least sandpiper (Paulson 1993). Long-toed stints are reported to look long-necked and alert in comparison to least sandpipers, but many individuals act like least sandpipers, exhibiting a 'mousy' behaviour. The bird we found showed this 'mousy' behaviour.

The long-toed stint breeds in the low arctic, sub-arctic and boreal zones. Most long-toed stints winter in South East Asia and the Philippines. A few hundred reach Australia, mostly in western regions (Hayman *et al.* 1986).

A description, 8 slides, and 5 prints of this bird were submitted to the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee, which unanimously accepted it as the 1st confirmed record of a long-toed stint in New Zealand (UBR98/13).

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Keywords long-toed stint; *Calidris subminuta*; first record; New Zealand; identification

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SHORT NOTE

First record of willie wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) for New Zealand

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Willie wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) are found throughout Australia, insular New Guinea, the Molluccas, the Bismarck Archipelago, and The Solomon Islands. Three subspecies are recognised, the nominate form occurring throughout temperate continental Australia below 20° S (Schodde & Mason 2000). Here I present the first record of this species for New Zealand, an individual seen on Mangere Island (44° 16' S, 176° 18' W) in the Chatham Island group, 800 km east of the South Island. Mangere Island, c. 3 km off the coast of Pitt Island, is a nature reserve administered by the New Zealand Department of Conservation.

Tertia Thurley, John Neilsen, Brenda Oldfield, and I found the bird perching on boulders and driftwood above the high-tide mark at the base of a steep cliff on the western side of the island at c. 0900 h (Chatham Island Time) on 27 October 1999. It was observed with binoculars (8×) and later a telescope (22×) until 1030 h. At dusk of the same day it was observed for a further 1.5 h until it flew up the cliff into vegetation, presumably to roost. It was not seen again despite efforts to find it over the next few days.

FIELD NOTES

A distant photograph of poor quality was taken, which demonstrates the jizz and black and white colouration but little else. The tail, back, upper and underwings, and breast were black. There was a

clear demarcation between the breast and belly, which, with the flanks, vent and undertail, was white. There was a thin and long white eyebrow. The eyes, tarsus, and bill were all dark.

The bird was similar in shape to a New Zealand fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*, but was a little larger and more heavily built. It had a very small, slightly down-curved bill. The tail was extremely long, about equal in length to the rest of the body. The tail was held slightly fanned and was moved constantly from side to side. The wings were held slightly drooped, with the wing tips held below the base of the tail, often obscuring the vent. While moving around, it occasionally flicked its wings.

It was extremely active, flying in rapid, short bursts similar to that used by a New Zealand fantail, with a tendency to return to the same perch. It appeared to be feeding on insects attracted to the rotting kelp on the foreshore where it was perched.

The combination of black upperparts, and white belly, vent and undertail coverts, the long laterally wagging tail, and a white eyebrow is diagnostic of this species (Slater 1974; Schodde & Tidemann 1986; Simpson & Day 1986). Although the species usually is very vocal this individual was not heard to call. The eastern subspecies is distinguished from the 2 northern subspecies by its very short, narrow bill flanked by a reduced number of rectal bristles that barely approach the tip of the bill (Schodde & Mason 2000). Although the bill of this bird was described as short, the rectal bristles are scarcely visible in the field and not mentioned in the notes taken during the observations. The subspecific identity of this individual remains in doubt.

In the Australasian region few other species could be mistaken for the willie wagtail. The migratory Asian black-backed wagtail *Motacilla lugens* has been recorded at least 4 times in Australia in recent years (Carter 1998) and possibly could reach New Zealand. Distinguished from the willie wagtail by the presence of large amounts of white on the upperwing coverts, scapulars, and outer remiges, and the black bib-shaped breast contrasting with a white chin, the black-browed wagtail also has a pipit-like jizz (MacKinnon & Phillipps 2000). The OSNZ Rare Birds Committee unanimously accepted this sighting as the first record of willie wagtail for New Zealand (UBR 13/00).

Our field notes show that in certain lights a dark sepia-brown tinge was visible on the tips of the flight feathers and wings. Juvenile *Rhipidura* have a slightly more brownish ground colour to the head and upperparts, and the greater and median secondary upperwing coverts have rufous or sepia tips. At least some of the population perform a partial post-juvenile moult during the austral summer, retaining juvenile remiges and upperwing coverts until the complete 2nd pre-basic moult when they

are about 1 year old. Birds in first basic plumage can be recognised by their glossy black head and upperparts (like the adults) but the juvenile wing-coverts are usually recognisable as their tips fade to pale cream or white; these paler tips are narrower than in fresh juveniles.

In Victoria, Australia, the post-juvenile moult (1st pre-basic) would usually happen in the summer (later than October, though some early-fledged birds are likely to start as early as October). Farther north (e.g. near Brisbane) where the breeding season starts earlier, it is likely that 1st pre-basic would also start earlier (D. Rogers pers. comm.).

The Chatham Island bird could have been a juvenile in very fresh juvenile plumage and just fledged, or it could have been in the 1st basic (c. 1 year plumage). It is unlikely, however, to be a fresh juvenile because willie wagtails in juvenile plumage generally remain in the company of adults (all plumage information: D. Rogers pers. comm.). Thus this individual is most likely to be a bird in its 1st year in 1st basic plumage.

Willie wagtails appear to migrate from New South Wales and Victoria to Queensland in winter (Clarke *et al.* 1999). This record in the New Zealand spring is probably of a migrant that overshot or was blown off course on its way south. It is notable that this species is rarely recorded in Tasmania (Sharland 1981) and there are apparently no records of this species from Norfolk or Lord Howe Islands, New Caledonia, or Vanuatu (Bregulla 1991; Hutton 1991; Doughty *et al.* 1999; Moore 1999). Given the lack of records from other Tasman Sea islands, the geographical oddity of this record may represent a demonstration of the dispersal of Australian birds to New Zealand by inadvertently being carried in the "jet stream". Gradient-level (1000 m) wind analysis for the Tasman Sea and over New Zealand in the week before this record suggests that there was a high-altitude "jet stream", and this may account for the presence of an Australian species far to the east of New Zealand (Australian Bureau of Meteorology, unpubl. data).

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Abstracts of papers presented at the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Inc., AGM and Conference, 1 June 2002, Hokitika, New Zealand

Westland birds symposium

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West of the South Island's Main Divide are the largest remaining tracts of native forest in New Zealand and some of the most extensive areas of temperate rainforest anywhere. These forests are now the stronghold for several endemic birds. Recently there has been controversy over plans by Timberlands West Coast Ltd to mill large parts of these forests and increasing opposition to the use of the poison 1080 (Sodium monofluoroacetate) to protect the endemic species that live there. These controversies have highlighted the need for information on West Coast birds. The Ornithological Society of New Zealand AGM and Conference held in Hokitika on 1 June 2002 was an opportune time to convene a symposium on Westland birds. The purpose of the symposium was to review our knowledge of Westland birds, to highlight current research and conservation, and to identify where further work is needed.

The symposium began with 4 presentations by Department of Conservation staff detailing current efforts to save 4 threatened or endangered bird taxa, 3 of which are endemic to Westland. The fourth, Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*) also occurs in Fiordland and Stewart Island. The efforts underway to save the 2 kiwi taxa (taxonomy follows Baker et al 1995) – the Okarito rowi (*Apteryx mantelli* "Okarito") and the Haast tokoeka (*A. australis* "Haast") – are nothing short of heroic. The lesson was clear, that without the dedication of the teams involved, the extensive use of poisons to control predators and the financial backing that has made this possible, these kiwi would now be extinct or the deaths of the final few birds imminent.

The contrast between the situation with the kiwi and the two equally distinctive seabird taxa was revealing. Both the Westland petrel (*Procellaria westlandica*) and the Fiordland crested penguin are faced by a variety of threats but conservation of these birds is piecemeal. Conservation relies on the dedication and commitment of a few Department of Conservation staff who have neither the research needed to quantify the problem, nor the financial and logistical backing required to underpin their efforts. The research proposed by Sue Waugh and discussed in the symposium will build on previous