

After the large wrecks of 1974 and 1975 this is a pleasing return, for the birds at least, to more normal conditions.

My thanks are due to all who took part in the Beach Patrol Scheme during 1976.

C. R. VEITCH, *Scheme Organiser*



BIRD DISTRIBUTION MAPPING SCHEME

Annual Report for 1976

The computer office has at last provided draft maps showing the distribution of all but the rarest of New Zealand's land and fresh-water birds (the inadvertent omission of a map for Little Black Shag will be rectified later), and also for several shore birds, especially those that come up rivers or breed inland; maps have not been printed for arctic waders, nor for species that are mainly pelagic.

Enough copies have been made of each map to supply a set on loan to each member of Council and to each Regional Representative. Although some copies are of rather indifferent quality, they should assist council members to decide on the form in which the maps should be published, and also permit Regional Representatives to use their local knowledge in searching for possible errors (while there is still time for corrections) and to obtain the views of local members on the future of the mapping scheme. Members who wish to see the draft maps, or to assist in checking their accuracy, should contact their Regional Representative or nearest member of Council.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the continued practical support of the Directors of Ecology Division (DSIR) and Wildlife Service (Department of Internal Affairs); copies of the draft atlas could not have been produced without this support. The Photographic Section of the Geological Survey helped with the problem of fitting coastlines to the computer maps. Finally, members should know that the significant progress achieved during the past year results mainly from the hard work, perseverance and enthusiasm of P. D. Gaze and C. J. R. Robertson.

P. C. BULL, *Scheme Organiser*



RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE

Annual Report for the Period

June 1976 - May 1977

Members: F. C. Kinsky (Convener)
B. D. Bell
D. H. Brathwaite
Sir Robert Falla

During the period June 1976 to May 1977 the Rare Birds Committee received four submissions, which were considered by the Committee, as set out below:

- A) The sighting of a Red-kneed Dotterel (*Charadrius cinctus*), Manawatu River estuary, 14th March 1976.

- The Committee confirmed the identification by majority vote.
- B) The sightings of a Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*) in Northland in 1976. A photograph was submitted with the report.
The identification of this bird was confirmed by the Committee on a unanimous vote.
- C) The alleged sighting of five Stilt Sandpipers (*Micropalama himantopus*) at the Manawatu River estuary on 13th October 1976.
This submission was rejected unanimously by the Committee.
- D) Sighting of a Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) at the Manawatu River estuary on 10th, 11th and 25th October 1976.
This submission was accepted and the identification was confirmed by the Committee, although only three out of the four committee members commented.

F. C. KINSKY, *Convener*

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SHORT NOTE

THE FIRST OCCURRENCE OF THE YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL (*Platalea flavipes*) IN NEW ZEALAND

On 23 August 1976, I sighted a group of four waders at Rangaunu Harbour, Kaitaia. I was immediately able to identify three of the birds as a White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) and two Royal Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*), but the fourth, though obviously a Spoonbill, was larger and had distinctive yellow legs, feet and bill. The Spoonbills were feeding vigorously in the shallows on the mud-flats, sometimes venturing out into water 45-50 cm in depth. On occasion these three birds would form into a line and work along the shoreline with typical sideways movements of their bills.

After consultation with a colleague, and reference to Frith 1969 (*Birds in the Australian high country*. Reed) and Slater 1970 (*A field guide to Australian birds*. Rigby), I realised that the unusual Spoonbill was, in fact, a Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*).

In its native Australia, the species ranges throughout most of the continent, with the exception of the south-west and Tasmania, frequenting swamps, shallow lakes, rivers and dams.

This, however, would appear to be the first record of a Yellow-billed Spoonbill in New Zealand and outside of continental Australia (Condon 1975, *Checklist of the birds of Australia*. RAOU).

A. E. BILLING, *C/o Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.*

[A photograph, unfortunately not reproducible here, together with the text, was submitted to the Rare Birds Committee which confirmed the identification on a unanimous vote — see Annual Report 1976/77. — Ed.]