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The Royal Spoonbill
in New Zealand

Conference & AGM
Wellington 2006

Rare Birds Committee Report

Rare Birds Committee report for the year to 31st July 2006

R. Paul Scofield (convenor)

Reconsideration of an historical record

As mentioned in last year's report (Scofield 2005) we have, in preparation for the forthcoming revision of the *Checklist of New Zealand Birds*, been reassessing some records of rare species in New Zealand to ensure that there is a uniform standard for first New Zealand records. In the past year one record was reassessed by the Rare Birds Committee (RBC):

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* [First New Zealand Record]

06/06 April 1944- July 1945 K.A. Wodzicki & J.R. Eyles.
This record has been the subject of much published literature (Wodzicki & Eyles 1945a & b; Wodzicki 1978; Crossland 1992). It was accepted as a white-phase Reef Heron in the 1953 Checklist. It was not mentioned in the 1970 Checklist but was considered the first record of Little Egret for New Zealand in the 1990 Checklist. It is the opinion of the RBC that this record represents the first documented record of Little Egret in New Zealand, thus formalising the decision of the 1990 Checklist Committee.

First records

Two records that were waiting on comments from overseas authorities were assessed. The committee encourages the observers of these records to submit accounts for publication.

Grey-backed Tern *Sterna lunata* [First and second New Zealand records]

18/99 1/2/1999 Papakanui Spit Gwenda Pulham
44/02 18 & 24/01/2002 Pungaereere River Mouth Barry Hartley
The committee had great difficulty in assessing this record as little information has been published on the immature plumage of this species, and no member of the committee had much field experience with tropical terns. Extensive consultation with overseas experts has resulted in members of the committee being confident of the identity of both individuals as Grey-backed Terns.

First records of species for islands that pre-date or supplement records in Scofield 2005

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

49/05 6/11/2004 Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Is Filipe Moniz

Fairy Martin *Hirundo ariel* [First record for The Snares]

15/06 10-13/11/2004 The Snares Thomas Mattern
Note this record predates 14/05 (Scofield 2005).

Bellbird *Anthornis melanura* [First record for Campbell Island]

39/05 23/02/2003 Campbell Island David Thompson
Note this record predates records 11/05, 25/05 and 28/05 (Scofield 2005).

Rare species accepted

Reports of the following rare species were accepted by the Rare Birds Committee during the past year. They are listed in the order used in the 1990 Checklist, with additional species inserted at the end of the appropriate family.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster plotus*

59/05 5/03/2005 Farewell Spit Steve Wood

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*

09/06 22/12/2005 Hagley Park William Cook & Joyce Miller.

White-eyed Duck *Aythya australis*

07/06 17/12/2005 Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch
Brent Stephenson

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

47/05 24/04/2005 Kaimai Range near Aongatete Robyn Skelton
60/05 21/07/2005 Moa Point, Wellington John Attwell
68/05 16/08/2005 Dashwood Hill, Seddon Mike Bell
76/05 20/09/2003 Big Totara River, Charleston Doug Arthur

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

67/05 28/08/2005 Waihopai Valley Rd, near Renwick Nick Allen
The long-staying vagrant still present in the same area.

Large Sand Dotterel *Charadrius leschenaultii*

13/06 18/10/2005 Waituna Lagoon Jurren Koets
43/05 10/04/2005 Papakanui Estuary (S. Kaipara Head) Ted Wnorowski
44/05 2/05/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*

11/06 28/01/2006 Farewell Spit Tim Barnard & Steve Wood
73/05 20/01/2004 Little Waihi Estuary, Bay of Plenty Tim Barnard

Pectoral Sandpiper *Caladris melanotos*

40/05 6/05/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

12/06 9/01/2006 Farewell Spit Peter Bellingham
41/05 10/04/2005 Papakanui Estuary (S. Kaipara Head) Ted Wnorowski
53/05 23/06/2005 Manukau Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

10/06 7 & 13/1/2006 Little Waihi Estuary Tim Barnard
52/05 25/06/2005 Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

42/05 11/04/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

55/05 24/06/2005 Manukau Harbour Ted Wnorowski
64/05 24/07/2005 Big Sand I., Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Japanese Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*

77/05 11/09/2005 Forest Lake (Rotokaeo), Hamilton A B Challinor

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

03/06 6/07/2003 Waipapakauri, Ninety Mile Beach
Rodger Cawte

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

46/05 15/05/2005 Lake Grassmere Brian Bell

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

63/05 27/07/2005 Big Sand I., Kaipara Harbour
Ted Wnorowski



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
02/06 18/12/2005 Maketu Estuary, Bay of Plenty
Tim Barnard

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*
54/05 25/06/2005 Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*
38/05 9/04/2005 Foveaux Strait Colin Miskelly
04/06 5/03/2005 off Kaikoura Peninsula Alan Shaw

Brown Skua *Catharacta lonnbergi*
05/06 16/04/2005 Kaikoura Alan Shaw

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*
61/05 5/05/2005 Bell Block, New Plymouth Don Perham

Species outside their usual range:

Brown Teal *Anas chlorotis*
45/05 27/03/2005 Waikanae River Allan Munro
70/05 1/10/2005 Waikuku Beach, Canterbury Andrew Thomas

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*
37/05 10-16/4/05 The Snares Colin Miskelly

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
62/05 25/07/2005 Mangere Ted Wnorowski

Erect-crested Penguin *Eudyptes sclateri*
66/05 28/03/2005 Moeraki Lighthouse Nick Allen

Fairy Tern *Sterna nereis davisae*
74/05 20/11/2004 Maketu Estuary Tim Barnard
75/05 22/10/2005 Maketu Estuary Tim Barnard

Snares-crested Penguin *Eudyptes robustus*
65/05 28/03/2005 Moeraki Lighthouse Nick Allen

Records for which no definitive species identification could be given

Unidentified hawk or owl
48/05 11/06/2005 Eastbourne

Unidentified boobies *Sula* sp.
14/06 3/01/1993 Upper Whangarei Harbour

Probable South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*
01/06 29/12/2005 near Clive, Hawke Bay

Possible Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes*
72/05 14/10/2005 Eastbourne

Probable White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*
71/05 4/03/2005 Erebus Cove, Port Ross

Probable black morph New Zealand Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*
51/05 7/07/2005 Lake Matheson

The following sightings have not been accepted or could not

be identified using the information provided
Submitters are welcome to provide more information to the committee.

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*
56/05 21/05/2005 40 km NNW North Cape

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*
57/05 21/05/2005 40 km East Northland

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*
58/05 12/03/2005 Farewell Spit

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*
69/05 20/09/2005 Cam River, Kaiapoi

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*
08/06 1/07/2004 Wellington Botanic Gardens

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*
50/05 30/12/2003 Awarua Bay

Species to be removed from the RBC appraisal list

Please note that in last year's report it was noted that it had been decided that due the large number of records submitted the following species no longer meet the criteria to be classified as rare birds, and so have been removed from the RBC appraisal list:

Australian Little Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

Large Sand Dotterel *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

This year the large number of records of the following species has meant the following species no longer meet the criteria to be classified as rare birds, and so have been removed from the RBC appraisal list:

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*

The committee does have a policy that any member may submit descriptions of any species that they are unable to identify.

Literature Cited

Crossland, A. C. 1992. 1992. First record of white phase reef heron (*Egretta sacra*) in New Zealand. *Notornis* 39: 233-4.

Scofield, R.P. 2005. Rare Birds Committee report for the six months to 31 July 2005. *Southern Bird* 23 (Sept): 7-9.

Wodzicki, K.A. and Eyles, J.R. 1945a. White phase of the Reef Heron or Matuku-moana *Demigretta sacra* (Gmelin) at Wairau Bar. *NZ Bird Notes* 1: 115-117

Wodzicki, K.A. and Eyles, J.R. 1945b. White phase of the Reef Heron in New Zealand. *Emu* 44: 181-182.

Wodzicki, K. 1978. Letter. *Notornis* 25: 356.

Fiji Important Bird Area Book Launched

A book on Fiji's best sites for birds was launched in early June by BirdLife International. *Important Bird Areas of Fiji: Conserving Fiji's Natural Heritage* describes 14 sites in Fiji which are of global importance for bird conservation. The book describes and updates the status and conservation needs of Fiji's 11 globally-threatened species of birds and 27 endemics, and is the first in a series of books that will eventually cover French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Palau.

For more details contact BirdLife International Pacific Programme at 11 Ma'afu Street, Suva, Fiji, or email don@birdlifepacific.org.fj