

Stray Feathers

The Greater Knot in inland New South Wales.—Two Greater Knots, *Calidris tenuirostris*, were seen at Barren Box swamp near Griffith, New South Wales, on December 22, 1962, by Mr. W. Braithwaite and myself. One of the Knots flew past our boat as we neared the swamp edge and landed some 50 yards distant alongside three other waders. I was able to approach within 20 yards and view the birds with 10 x 50 binoculars. Two of the birds were Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, *Erolia acuminata*, and the other two Greater Knots. My field notes taken at the time read similar to those given in Mr. Wheeler's article, which I had read previously, except that the upper parts and the breast were not so well marked.—JOHN MCKEAN, Canberra, A.C.T., 20/3/63.

Victorian records of the Greater Knot.—Although the Greater Knot, *Calidris tenuirostris*, occurs rather regularly in small numbers near Sydney and there has been one occurrence in South Australia—an injured bird taken as a specimen from a flock of seven at Troubridge Shoal in May 1957 (McPherson, *Emu* 57: 346)—the species had escaped Victorian observers until three years ago.

The first indication of the Greater Knot being recorded for this State was when Graham Pizzey of Portsea, Victoria, sent me an enlargement of the head of a wader he had seen and photographed on Mud Islands in Port Phillip Bay late in 1959. The photo was sent to Mr. Arnold McGill of Sydney, who said it looked like the Greater Knot, and others were of the same opinion but nobody was prepared to accept the photograph as definitely being that of the species.

On January 31, 1960, John McKean saw a Greater Knot in the company of five Lesser Knots, *Calidris canutus*, at Mud Islands and was able to watch the bird for 15 minutes before it was disturbed and flew off. As the species had not been recorded for the State, and as McKean was the only person to see the bird, it was decided to await confirmation.

Confirmation came on January 29, 1961, when a sight record was made on Mud Islands by members of the Altona Survey Group, including Messrs. Ken Simpson and John McKean. Six birds were noted and the discovery recorded in *The Bird Observer* (Wheeler, no. 357, August 1961). By a strange coincidence, during that same week-end (January 28-30), Mr. Fred Smith and Mr. Len Robinson observed a bird they suspected to be the Greater Knot on the Spit near Little River, about 20 miles north-west of Mud Islands. Messrs. Smith and Robinson returned to the same area on February 2 and both obtained excellent views of the bird, thus confirming their first report. A full account of this finding was published in *The Bird Observer* (Smith, no. 352, March 1961).

The next report for Victoria was an inland one made on Lake Tutchewope, near Mystic Park (north-west Victoria), on October 10, 1962. During the morning three of us visited the lake, Messrs. V. and T. Lowe and myself, and we flushed a party of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, *Erolia acuminata*, together with a much larger wader with a whitish rump. Although we searched the shore of the lake for some time we could not locate the strange wader. Later in the afternoon Messrs. V. Lowe, P. Disher and myself again visited Lake Tutchewope and this time located the wader again feeding with the sandpipers on the lake shore. The birds appeared jumpy and we could only get within about 60 yards of them. With the aid of 10 x 50 binoculars a detailed description was possible. The bird was much larger than the sandpipers, estimated length about 12 inches and with a stout and rugged appearance. The bill was blackish in colour, straight, stout and fairly long. The head was greyish with no discernable eyebrow. The upper parts were heavily mottled grey and chestnut, the throat was greyish, breast blackish with crescent markings along the sides and flanks. The legs were shortish and appeared greyish in colour. The axillaries and underwing were greyish-white. The bird fed with quick probing jabs well into the mud. By these characters the bird was recognized as the Greater Knot. The discovery should be credited to Mr. Tom Lowe, who saw the bird during the morning visit and immediately recognized it as something different. I was sorry that Tom was unable to be with us during the afternoon visit.

On returning to Melbourne I was able, through the courtesy of Mr. McEvey of the National Museum, to examine the skin B7085, that of the Greater Knot taken in South Australia on May 6, 1957. This bird was practically identical with the one seen at Mystic Park. The chestnut colouring of the back on both birds, the one October and the other May, indicated traces of breeding plumage of birds arriving from and about to return to the breeding grounds. This constituted the first inland record for the species in Australia.

More and more waders are being sighted in north-west Victoria and south-east New South Wales, which points to the possibility of an overland route taken by many of our migratory waders. Research into this possibility could well be carried out and all inland records should be made available for publication, thus helping to make as complete a picture as possible.

The next observation of the Greater Knot in Victoria was at Fishermens Bend near Port Melbourne, when two birds were seen by Messrs. Chas. and Brent Hall, and later by Mr. Fred Smith, on November 3, 1962. Both birds had well-spotted breasts.

Mr. Smith accompanied members of the Victorian Ornithological Research Group (V.O.R.G.) to Mud Islands during the week-end of January 26-28, 1963. He made a particular study of the wader population and made as accurate counts as possible of the 23

species of waders reported during the visit. Of the Greater Knot he recorded 51 on January 26, 64 on January 27, and 34 on January 28. Those counts were of birds seen together. Others were scattered about the islands and he estimated at least 100 Greater Knots on Mud Islands. The quick build-up from one possible bird in 1959 to at least 100 early in 1963 is indeed fantastic.

I would in conclusion like to thank Mr. John McKean and Mr. Fred Smith for giving me details to make the records complete.—ROY WHEELER, Windsor, Vic., 20/3/63.

Movements of young Giant Petrels bred in Antarctica.—Widespread movement of young Giant Petrels soon after leaving the nest has been well established, and an account of the results of banding these birds on Macquarie Island has been given recently by S. E. Ingham (*Emu*, 59: 189).

One of the few colonies close to the mainland of Antarctica is to be found on the Frazier Islands, $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the ANARE station at Wilkes ($110^{\circ} 10' \text{ E.}$, $66^{\circ} 16' \text{ S.}$) on the Budd Coast of Wilkes Land.

In 1961, young Giant Petrels, as judged by their dark plumage, were sighted at the station from the second week in March. These birds were sometimes found gorging themselves at the rubbish dump or on seal blubber during the following six weeks, but they disappeared during May and June. Thereafter they re-appeared occasionally when weather permitted and by September they were seen quite frequently flying along the coast in either direction, or resting on the sea ice, usually in the company of older, lighter-plumaged birds.

Two recoveries have been made of chicks banded in March, 1961, namely Nos. 130-16153 and 130-16162. The former was found exhausted on Easter Island ($109^{\circ} 24' \text{ W.}$, $27^{\circ} 08' \text{ S.}$) on October 6, 1961 and the latter was caught in a fishing net at Still Bay ($21^{\circ} 20' \text{ E.}$, $34^{\circ} 20' \text{ S.}$) near the southern extremity of South Africa, towards the end of July of the same year.

A further instance of a Giant Petrel banded in Antarctica having been sighted in South Africa was given by J. Prévost (*Alauda*, 26: 125), when a chick banded at Iles des Pétrils ($146^{\circ} 01' \text{ E.}$, $66^{\circ} 40' \text{ S.}$), Terre Adélie, in 1956, was recovered in South Africa in the same area at $20^{\circ} 40' \text{ E.}$, $34^{\circ} 28' \text{ S.}$ seven months later.

It is encouraging that 6 of 70 chicks banded on the Frazier Islands by W. J. L. Sladen's party in 1959 have been recovered, including one from the sea near New Zealand. It is hoped that full opportunity will be given to Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions to continue with this programme.—M. N. ORTON, Medical Officer, Wilkes, Antarctica, wintering party 1961.