

## Flocking to Christchurch

FOR DECEMBER 1990, Christchurch may have to be renamed City of Birds. Hundreds of ornithologists will flock from around the world for the 20th International Ornithological Congress (IOC). They will be treated to a five-day feast of all things feathered. From parent-offspring relationships and bird song, to how birds adapt to life in the extremes of deserts and Antarctica, the whole gambit of bird matters will be covered.

The New Zealand organisers hope that the Congress, held once every four years, will have a distinctly Southern Hemisphere flavour. New Zealand ornithological work will be well represented, along with work from countries as diverse as Venezuela and Belgium.

There will be a special New Zealand night, when Ian Atkinson and Ben Bell will look at past and present ornithology in New Zealand.

There will be a choice of 48 sessions to attend, as well as discussion groups, 15-minute talks, posters, trade displays and bird films.

Among the New Zealand offerings will be:

- An address by John Craig to the whole Congress on communal breeding.
- Ron Moorhouse's studies on the ecology of kaka on Kapiti Island will be part of a session on parrots and parakeets that ranges from the Bahamas to Argentina.
- While some people use fossils to look at the makeup of past bird communities, Geoff Chambers and Andy Cooper have been reconstructing the genetic makeup of an extinct moa.
- Clare Veltman and Susan Triggs will look at

blue ducks and how they have adapted to life on rivers, and Murray Williams will look at the unique features of waterfowl on islands, as part of a session on Southern Hemisphere water birds.

- The kinds of songs that starlings sing in New Zealand compared to France will get an airing from Peter Jenkins in a session on how birds acquire and use their songs.
- Mike Imber will share his findings about the food petrels shared with him, in a session on what seabirds eat in the subantarctic and Antarctica.
- Jim Mills's study of red-billed gulls at Kai-koura will share the platform with mute swans and Tengmalm's owls in a session on long term population studies of birds.
- Mick Clout will chair a symposium on how birds and plants help each other when birds pollinate flowers and disperse the seeds of plants.
- John Cockrem and Murray Potter will look at the role of hormones in the breeding of the brown kiwi.

There will be a number of sessions which address topical environmental issues:

- How habitat loss affects birds
- How fishing and pollution affects seabirds
- The role of captive breeding in conserving endangered species
- How birds can be indicators of global contamination

There will also be a "day in the country" to visit Canterbury bird watching spots, and sample a slice of rural life at Mount Hutt Station. The conference organisers have

arranged a suite of nature tours around New Zealand before and after the Congress including a subantarctic cruise (see the May 1989 issue of *Forest and Bird*).

The IOC is one of four events being held in New Zealand in late 1990 as part of "The World of Birds – a Southern Perspective". Stamp collectors and film buffs also get a chance to look birdwards, and the International Council for Bird Preservation will hold a conference on bird conservation in Hamilton. ✈

### Alison Ballance

For further information on the International Ornithological Conference, to be held in Christchurch from the 2-9 December 1990, please contact:

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## Books Received

### Walter Buller – Reluctant Conservationist, Ross Galbreath.

(Govt Print, \$44.95) Buller's reputation was no better in the 19th century than it is today, as this fascinating study of morals and manners of the period shows. We may have Buller to thank for attractive bird books, but his inglorious advocacy for those same (often endangered birds) leaves a bad taste. 336 pages of how not to tread lightly on the earth.

### Between the Tides, by Mike Bradstock.

(Bateman, \$29.95) The revised edition of Bradstock's book will be welcomed by *Forest and Bird* members who are taking a close interest in our campaign for the coast. Before you head off to the beach this summer, swot up on what is really happening down on the shore. It will make your visit that much more interesting.

### Untouched Horizons: Photographs from the South Island Wilderness, by Nic Bishop.

(Hodder & Stoughton, \$49.95) This beautiful book heralds a significant new talent onto the somewhat crowded natural history book scene. Explorer Bishop manages to come up with a portrayal of the South Island's wild places that is vivid and fresh, and the text sparkles along with the images.

