

from the northern part of Gisborne-East Coast. There, in hill-country farmland, ducklings dispersed beyond the range shown by adults that moulted in the same area. Clearly, in future, as well as defining the limits of dispersal of moulting populations, the wildlife manager should give more attention to the first-year age class.

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SHORT NOTES

RARE TERNS UNDATED

Mention of the sighting of rare birds without a precise date can be very frustrating because the time of the occurrence may be highly significant and the occurrence itself may gain in significance as it slips further into the past.

Recently I have re-read a couple of tantalising references. Perhaps someone with curiosity, time and the instincts of a Sherlock Holmes would care to do a little 'digging.' There may be relevant diaries in public libraries or museums.

(a) Stead E. F. (1932 *Life Histories of N.Z. Birds*, p. 25) writes of *Chlidonias albistriata* [sic] "I have seen it on the Waiouru plains and have often wondered that it was not a more plentiful bird in that locality." Yet in 1879 (Buller W. L., *History of N.Z. Birds* 2nd edition, p. 72) Captain Mair discovered a flourishing colony on the sandbanks of the upper Whangaehu, south-east of Mt Ruapehu. Were some still nesting there when Stead noted their presence in that same locality? What was the year and the season of Stead's visit? Were the birds he saw descendants of those upon which Mair had reported? Were the

headwaters of the Whangaehu an ancestral breeding area and when were they abandoned ?

(b) Guthrie Smith H. (1936 *Sorrows and Joys of a N.Z. Naturalist*, p. 120) in a chapter headed 'Terns in New Zealand,' states "Consorting with a colony of the Inland Tern (*Sterna albistriata*) [*sic*] I have come across once in my life the Black-bellied Tern (*Sterna* sp.). The remarkable velocity of the flight of this species, their celerity of movement when in the air would have rendered the pair conspicuous even had their plumage not vividly individualised them." Clearly White-winged Black Terns (*C. leucopterus*); but where ? and when ? Were they perhaps a breeding pair ?

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WEKAS SWIMMING

Part of the management of Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds includes the removal of Wekas (*Gallirallus a. australis*). Most of the birds have been trapped and released on the neighbouring mainland. After many "last" wekas had been caught, it was suspected that some birds were returning. To determine this it was decided to band all birds released. During late May and June 1978 five wekas were caught, banded and released at Deep Bay, north-west of Maud Island across the Apuau Channel. Three of these birds had subsequent histories.

L. 5158, an adult male, was trapped and relocated on 3 June. On 13 June, 10 days later, the bird was retrapped on Maud Island, 5 metres from the original trap site.

L. 5156, an adult female, was caught and transferred the same day as the previous bird. This bird was retrapped on Maud Island on 16 June, 13 days later, close to where originally caught.

L. 5153, an adult female, was trapped on 28 May but could only be relocated, because of weather conditions, on 31 May. This bird was retrapped back on Maud Island on 11 June, 12 days later. It was trapped 60 metres from the original site. It was again returned to Deep Bay but was retrapped back on Maud Island within a few metres of the last site on 15 June, only 3 days later.

The capacity of wekas to return to Maud Island explained the many "last" wekas caught. It illustrates the birds' territorial tenacity and homing instincts and their ability to swim considerable distances. From where the birds were released at Deep Bay they would have to travel some 2.5 kilometres by land and then swim the Apuau Channel. At its narrowest point this is some 914 metres wide. Its tidal flow reaches some 3-4 knots and it has a long reach exposed to westerly winds. Whether the birds wait for favourable weather and a slack tide is not known.

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