

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SHORT NOTES

## CRESTED GREBES ON FROZEN LAKES

On 25 July 1982, Derek and Peter Howden, Marion and Ross Lane and I visited the main Ashburton lakes in Canterbury to count the Southern Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus australis*). We counted 21 birds, which can be compared with 21 counted in July 1980 and 42 in July 1981 and is well below the summer counts of 58, 57 and 54 in 1978-1980 (Sagar & O'Donnell 1982, *Notornis* 29: 143-149).

The region had been subjected to a series of severe frosts, and so very little open water was available to the grebes. Lake Emma was almost completely frozen over with only about 50 x 50 metres of open water. The one grebe seen was on the ice some distance from the open water. Lake Camp had a similar amount of open water, and the one grebe seen was on this water. Only the easternmost of the Maori Lakes had any open water, but no grebes were seen.

Lake Heron had a small patch of open water on the southern shore near Mt Arrowsmith homestead, and three grebes were there; and another small area along the southern edge of the Cameron fan, and 15 grebes were there. These 15 were not reluctant to fly when approached and at one stage were hard to keep account of, so many

were in the air at once. One grebe, after several unsuccessful attempts to take off from the ice, found a small patch of open water and dived, coming up under some thin ice where it could get its head and neck through but not its body. It dived again, but we waited 2-3 minutes before a grebe, presumably the same one, appeared in another small patch of open water about 130 metres away. We were amazed that it could travel so far and find the small open patch in all that ice.

Lake Clearwater was completely frozen over, and in the morning the only grebe was in the centre, apparently with its foot held in the ice but not looking distressed. It was still there in the evening. On the 28th we returned, well equipped to go out on the ice, only to find a harrier (*Circus approximans*) and a heap of feathers on the ice.

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### A THIRD ARCTIC TERN AT THE TARAWERA RIVER MOUTH

On 18 July 1982, C. de Lange and I made two visits to the Tarawera River mouth. During the first visit, from 11-11.30 a.m., we were joined by Mr & Mrs M. Hutton and counted 39 Black-fronted Terns (*Sterna albobriata*) and 58 White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*) at roost on the beach. Each species was in a separate loose flock, but the flocks were contiguous.

C. de Lange and I returned to the river mouth at 12.30 p.m. and found an Arctic Tern (*S. paradisaea*) present between the Black-fronted Tern and White-fronted Tern flocks. At 12.35 p.m. it flew out to sea.

The day was overcast with a cool 15-20 knot north-westerly wind and the tide was low. Our vantage point, a sandbank overlooking the flat beach roost, allowed us to look almost straight down on the birds 8-10 metres away.

This bird was in the same dress as the previous two Arctic Terns seen here, the first on 10 June 1978 (*Notornis* 26: 63-67), the second on 17 May 1981 (*Notornis* 28: 213-214). As it was still in non-breeding plumage, i.e. black bill and white forehead and fore-crown, and had a dark carpal bar, in July this bird must have been a subadult.

Once again the large extent of white forehead and crown, bordered with sooty black-brown, was the first feature to distinguish an Arctic Tern from nearby White-fronted Terns. The smaller size was obvious from our vantage point but we had to lie flat on top of the bank to see its short red legs.

P. C. M. LATHAM, *c/o Papamoa Beach P.O., via Te Puke*