

numbers have been seen throughout the 1978-79 and 1979-80 summers near the new Dannevirke sewage ponds.

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ARCTIC SKUAS CHASE WADERS AT MIRANDA

On the morning of 7 October 1979 at about 0720 hours I was at the Old Limeworks at Miranda, Firth of Thames, watching two Spur-winged Plovers (*Vanellus novaehollandiae*) in the company of about ten Pied Stilts (*Himantopus leucocephalus*). They were feeding on the fringe of a small pool near the seashore.

Looking northwards I saw two skuas silhouetted against the low sunlight. I watched them through my telescope (20-45x) as they chased White-fronted Terns (*Sterna striata*) but was unable to identify them. They left the terns and flew towards me and I switched to binoculars (8x30) as they came closer. They crossed the far side of the pool about 10 m away, flushing two or three stilts. As they flew above me I had an excellent view of both birds. One was completely dark, the other having a collar of yellowish streaking, and each had sharply pointed tail-feathers projecting about 3 cm from the rest of the rounded tail, marking them as Arctic Skuas (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).

They circled around the pond again, and as I watched, the paler bird swooped on a rising stilt. As it was hit, the stilt was jolted and I saw two white feathers come floating down, but its flight was not visibly affected. Because of the position of the stilt's body and the speed of the action I did not see what the skua had struck the stilt with.

Hearing the loud calling of a Spur-winged Plover behind me I turned to see the darker skua pursuing it over the shellbanks parallel to the shore for about 20 m and then out to sea. The other bird followed soon after, and I did not see any other skuas that day. I understand that there are very few records of skuas chasing other birds over land in New Zealand.

IAN SOUTHEY, R.D. 3, Pukekohe.



SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS IN THE NUMBERS OF BAR-TAILED GODWITS ON NELSON HAVEN

The flock of Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) on Nelson Haven uses the salt flats on either side of Sewerside Drive as a high tide roost. During spring tides all the birds are found in this area as they have a preference for soft ground. Only once have they been seen on the Boulder Bank at spring tide and that was because of