

a few gulps, and starting again. On another occasion, an egret was following a grazing cow as usual when a large (about 2½ inches) grasshopper was flushed. As it rose into the air, the egret gave chase, but the grasshopper's zig-zagging soon out-manoeuvred the egret, and it dived to the ground, unluckily near a Starling, which was much too agile to be out-manoeuvred.

At the start of the 1979-80 season, I saw the first Cattle Egrets starting to change into breeding plumage on 16 September, and by mid-October about half the birds seen were well coloured, the rest at all stages, including a few still plain white. On 24 October, earlier than in previous years, about 200 nests were in the early stages of construction. These early nests had eggs by early November, and by the time of writing (mid-November) some 800 nests had been built.

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## SHORT NOTE

### TUIS ALL YEAR ROUND

In my area on the northern side of Whangarei Harbour, the population of Tuis (*Prothemadera novaeseelandiae*) seems to remain most of the year, being less plentiful only around February. This persistence seems to be dictated by the availability of suitable food plants in most seasons. The berries of the haekaro (*Pittosporum umbellatum*) is a favourite food in June, and I have seen 9 Tuis feeding in one tree. The Taiwan cherry (*Prunus campanulata*) flowers in August and is a favourite for nectar. The winter red gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxyloides rosea*) is another favourite, and I have seen 15 Tuis in one tree. The flame tree (*Erythrina Xsykesii*) has a varied flowering period from May to September-October and is another attraction. Kowhai flowering sees the birds more dispersed because of the kowhai groves in the bush. The puriri flowers over a longer time and they are many here. Mid-December is the pohutukawa season, which brings the Tuis to the seaside. Flax in season, peach blossom and loquat blossom all add to the menu.

I have no doubt that the flame tree, the Taiwan cherry, the haekaro and the winter gum help increase the number of Tuis able to survive the winter in Northland.

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