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SHORT NOTE

ALBINO OYSTERCATCHER ON OTAGO PENINSULA

Returning from observing the Royal Albatross at Taiaroa Head on 19 December 1977, I noticed a white bird on a beach between Portobello and Broad Bay. My first impulse was that it might be a Little Egret, but as we drew closer it began to show the long straight orange bill suggestive of an oystercatcher.

By close examination through binoculars, I found that it was an albino oystercatcher in which even the pigment of the bill had been diluted. The whole of the plumage was white, although I could not ascertain whether the eyes were pigmented or not. There were other normally-coloured oystercatchers not far away.

Oliver (1955, *N.Z. Birds*, 2nd ed., pp. 246, 248) has noted several records of albino oystercatchers in New Zealand as follows: South Island Pied — one on several occasions at Ettrick in Otago, another in the Firth of Thames in 1942, an albino almost pure white except for the wings at the mouth of the Waimakariri River, and a white bird with a light fawn head near the entrance to Otago Harbour; North Island Pied — one recorded at Opotiki by Buller.

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