



FIGURE 3 — Mummified carcass of Crabeater Seal from southernmost Black Island locality. Carcass measures 1870 mm, and is complete except for fur.

Island, and on 3 December 1977 seven were observed flying north along the west coast.

I thank VXE-6 squadron for transport in the field. This study was supported by the University Grants Committee.

Dr J. D. COLLEN, *Dept. of Geology, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington.*



#### NEW NESTING SITE FOR LITTLE BLACK SHAG

On 15 April 1977 I noted three nests of Little Black Shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*), two containing chicks, on an old *Macrocarpa* tree overhanging the junction of Orakei Creek and Orakei Basin, in an estuary of the Waitemata Harbour. In the same tree is an established nesting colony of Pied Shag (*Phalacrocorax varius*).

I had been absent for twelve weeks prior to finding these nests and was very surprised when I took up my binoculars to bring my shag records up to date.

The three nests, constructed of locally available weeping willow and sedge were close together, forming a platform on a defoliated low branch with a westerly aspect, 14m above the water. This is a section of the tree not favoured by Pied Shags, possibly because of prevailing westerly winds. Two of the nests of *P. sulcirostris* contained chicks, three rather active black in one, two younger brown in the other. All chicks had prominent pale yellow bills. The third nest was empty.

The parent Little Black Shags soon arrived to feed the chicks, thus confirming identification, later corroborated by Sylvia Reed using 30x telescope. Each chick, immediately after feeding, projected a stream of excreta over the rim of the nest into the water below.

The three older chicks appeared ready to fly on 28 April but did not actually do so until 2 May 1977, presumably because on 28 April Orakei Basin was drained and remained empty until 2 May. The other two chicks flew on 9 May.

Little Black Shags occur in this area all the year round, often roosting in the same tree as the Pied Shags, but their numbers fluctuate according to season. In April-May-June flocks of 200-300 are seen fishing in Purewa Creek, Orakei Basin and Orakei Creek, when Yellow-eyed Mullet are shoaling. Some Pied Shags often join these flocks in fishing. For the rest of the year small numbers of Little Black Shags occur sporadically. Flocks in flight, or when fishing, make no audible calls, but on alighting in the roosting tree, very quiet, low-key, duck-like quacking sounds are heard.

There are no previous records in literature of *P. sulcirostris* breeding in the Orakei area which has been under observation from my window since mid-1970. It will be interesting to see whether they nest here again next autumn.

MARIE P. BUCHLER, 131A Ngapuhi Road, Remuera, Auckland 5.



#### FIJI SCARLET ROBIN EATING WORMS ON THE GROUND

The Scarlet Robins, *Petroica multicolor*, of Fiji comprise two (or possibly three, if Taveuni has a distinct race) of the 13 or 14 subspecies which are distributed from Australia to Samoa (Mayr 1934).

So far as we know nothing has been published concerning the diet of the Scarlet Robin in Fiji.

In Australia, Macdonald (1973) described Scarlet Robins as "arboreal and terrestrial," but listed only "insects" as their food. Hill (1967) stated that they "frequently dart down to pick up insects and other small fry from the ground." Officer (1969) stated, with some redundancy, that their diet includes "larvae, beetles, moths and insects."