

## BLACK-BILLED GULL IN NORTHERN WAIRARAPA

First definitely identified at the northeastern end of Wairarapa Lake on 2 March 1942, the Black-billed Gull (*Larus bulleri*) had been doubtfully sighted in the distance at Te Opai Lagoon, Kahutara, on 3 April 1938 when the tern-ilke flight of small gulls too far away to identify specifically suggested the Black-billed. Only one bird was seen at the lake on 2 March, though on 9 March three were recorded. The continued presence of this species, at least in late summer and autumn, in this area, is indicated by subsequent sightings in later years, up to a maximum of 19 on 2 March 1954. In the same area Barrie Heather, in Classified Summarised Notes recorded 51 on 29 January 1955 (*Notornis* 17 (3): 83).

On 1 February 1948 two Red-billed Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae scopulinus*) and on 8 February 1948 eleven Red-billed were seen in the same lake area with four Black-billed but these are the only records of the Red-billed Gull inland in the Wairarapa known to me.

Although constantly about the Wairarapa from 1920 onwards I never saw a Black-billed Gull north of the Wairarapa Lake until 5 December 1971 when a flock of 17 appeared on the newly-constructed Masterton Borough sewage ponds at Homebush, adjacent to the Ruamahanga River. On 7 April 1973 another flock of 23 was recorded.

In an excavation area close to Masterton at Te Ore Ore, where ponds have been created, on 18 October 1976 a flock of 20 Black-billed Gulls was seen calling in flight when circling the area for a few minutes before flying off to the south, evidently on passage. In a third man-made pond area, at Waingawa, south of Masterton, two Black-billed Gulls were seen on 28 March 1977, the first to be noted here in observations extending over many decades.

These records indicate the increasing frequency of this species in Northern Wairarapa in recent years.

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## HOARY-HEADED GREBE IN NORTHLAND

On 30 January 1978 during the course of a survey of dune lakes, we saw two Hoary-headed Grebes (*Podiceps poliocephalus*) on Lake Wingy. The birds were in breeding plumage and easily distinguishable from the New Zealand Dabchick (*Podiceps rufopectus*) present on the same lake, by their upper parts being lightly defined in broad mottled stripes of greyish-brown, a black band from head down back of neck, tail end light grey, black band on front of neck and clearly striped side of head. Details of description tallied with that given by Maida Barlow (1976, *Notornis* 23: 184).

Watched for 1½-2 hours, sometimes as close as 15-20 metres, they swam and dived without bringing anything visible to the surface, sometimes isolated, sometimes among a mixed flock of some 200 Paradise and Mallard Duck. One rather striking feature not previously recorded was the different position in which each bird held its neck. In fact we christened them "Longneck" and "Shortneck." The former (male?) carried its neck elongated and erect so that it appeared thin, whereas the other bird held its neck in the folded position, appearing thicker.

Lake Wingy is the northernmost of a group of three lakes situated on a Lands & Survey farm at the end of Ngataki Road, roughly halfway between Pukenui and Te Kao. It is not easy to find without local directions, in fact on our first day we missed it altogether. A local member, Mr Vic Hensley, who lives in Ngataki Road, had not seen these grebes himself but had heard reports of unusual grebes being seen on lakes further south early in 1977. Possibly the same pair have gradually moved northwards.

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IMMATURE BLACK-FACED CUCKOO SHRIKE (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) NEAR INVERCARGILL

On 15 June 1976, I heard a strange call at Daffodil Bay, Invercargill Estuary. I then saw a bird fly across the bay from some pine trees. Its undulating flight and relatively long tail were noticeable. I found it perched in a Eucalyptus tree along a bough of which it ran in a manner reminiscent of the Kokako. I was able to obtain good views of the bird with 8 x 30 binoculars at distances of 30 to 60 metres.

The bird eventually flew off towards some *Macrocarpa* trees about half a kilometre distant. Despite later searches, the bird was not seen again.

After consultation with B. D. Bell and F. C. Kinsky, the bird was confirmed as an immature Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike. This species occurs in Australia, Tasmania, New Guinea and nearby islands. Throughout Australia it has a widespread distribution (Frith H. J. (ed.) 1969, *Birds in the Australian High Country*, Sydney: Reed).

*Description:*

Dark (black) patch extending from the bill through the eye to the ear coverts. This patch was contrasted above and below by pale silvery-grey plumage.