

New Zealand Bird Notes

Bulletin of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

Edited by R. H. D. STIDOLPH, 114 Cole Street, Masterton.
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SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING.

A continued increase in the number of members, who now total 240; proposals for more extensive ringing of birds and a projected gannet census were highlights of the annual meeting of the Society, which was held in the Dominion Museum, Wellington, on 25th May, 1946. Dr. R. A. Falla (retiring president) presided over a large attendance of members. It was the first general meeting to be held since 1941.

On the suggestion of Dr. Hamilton, the meeting agreed to a recommendation that the incoming committee should set up a sub-committee to examine the constitution, with a view to clarifying several doubtful points, their recommendations to be presented at the next annual general meeting.

Financial Statement.—On the motion of Dr. Falla, seconded by Dr. Wodzicki, the following statement was adopted and approved.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
In Hand, 1/5/45	78	9	2	R.A.O.U. Subscription	2	2	0
Subscriptions	86	11	11	White-eye Circular	11	6	0
Donations	1	17	6	"N.Z. Bird Notes," No. 9	7	5	0
Interest	2	19	4	"N.Z. Bird Notes," No. 10	7	5	0
	£169	17	11	Supplement	8	2	6
	32	8	0	Postage, etc.	3	12	6
	£137	9	11		£32	8	0
In hand, 1/5/46	£137	9	11				

Mr. Hursthouse suggested that in future the presentation of the financial position should conform to the usual requirements of a full statement of the year's accounts.

The Committee's report, which was adopted, stated, *inter alia*, that the Society was fortunate in exchanging publications with the Wilson Ornithological Club, U.S.A. The Society now had the Wilson Bulletin Vols. 56 and 57, a most valuable addition to the available ornithological literature, and its thanks were due to the Wilson Ornithological Club.

Amendments to the Constitution.—The following alterations, of which due notice had been given, were approved:—

- (a) Insertion of an extra clause to read "No alteration to the Constitution may be made unless all members have been informed of the proposed change at least fourteen days before the meeting at which the change is made.
- (b) Insertion at the end of clause 7 the words "Any officer of the society may also hold the office of Regional Organiser."
- (c) In clause 8 the words "a Recorder" to be inserted in line 2 after the words "a Secretary-Treasurer."
- (d) Insertion of a new clause to read, "The function of the Recorder shall be to take charge of any books, papers, photographs, etc., belonging to the society and if possible to keep for the use of members, a list of the ornithological literature available in the Dominion. Any officer of the society may also hold the office of Recorder."
- (e) Clause 16 to be deleted and replaced by the following: "One member of the committee shall be appointed to act as editor (or, if necessary, two members to act as joint editors) of the Bulletin of the Society, "N.Z. Bird Notes."

Proposals re Ringing.—An account of the scheme for ringing silver-eyes and an indication of its possible extension to include other birds was given by Mr. J. M. Cunningham. On the motion of Dr. Falla, seconded by Mr. Fleming, a ringing sub-committee consisting of Mr. Cunningham as convener, Dr. Wodzicki, and Mr. Sibson was elected. Mr. Yerex pointed out that in a comprehensive scheme there was likely to be some technical breach of the Animals Protection Act and it was agreed that any scheme proposed by the committee or adopted by the society should be referred to the Department of Internal Affairs for official sanction.

Overdue Subscriptions.—On the suggestion of Mr. Cunningham, it was recommended to the incoming committee that in future accounts be sent to members when subscriptions fall due, and again when they remained unpaid.—Agreed.

Moved by Dr. Wodzicki, seconded by Mr. Hursthouse, that all members whose subscriptions were more than three years in arrear should be struck off the membership list after a reminder had been sent to them by their Regional Organiser.—Agreed.

Name of the Magazine.—Moved by Dr. Oliver and seconded by Mr. Yerex, that the matter of changing the name of the society's publication, "N.Z. Bird Notes" should be referred to the incoming committee for consideration.—Agreed.

Nominations of Officers.—Moved by Mr. Hursthouse and seconded by Dr. Hamilton, as a recommendation that clause 14 of the constitution be amended to read: "Notice is to be sent to each member not later than 1st April advising them that nominations of officers under clause 6 close on 14th April. (Names of retiring members to be given.) Provided that if no nominations be received for any office, the general meeting may then table nominations."

This decision was made following on an earlier discussion that arose regarding the election of officers (a list of officers for the year appears on page 1), especially as to the interpretation of various clauses in the constitution. It was agreed that difficulties arose where no nominations had been received.

Supplement to Volume 1.—Mr. Stidolph wrote pointing out certain omissions in the list of N.Z. Birds published as a supplement to Volume 1. Moved by Mr. Fleming and seconded by Mr. Cunningham, that corrections should be printed, distributed and numbered in a form suitable for pasting in the back of the supplement.—Agreed.

Dr. Wodzicki suggested that the incoming committee should endeavour to arrange fuller reviews of "N.Z. Bird Notes" in the "Emu," and arrange further exchanges with overseas publications.

Dr. Wodzicki also outlined a project whereby the society might assist in compiling a gannet census. This was approved and Mr. Fleming agreed to make inquiries regarding aerial photographs of certain inaccessible gannetries.

Moved by Mr. Fleming, seconded by Mr. Sibson, that the incoming committee be recommended to explore the possibility of reprinting the three first cyclostyled bulletins uniformly with "N.Z. Bird Notes."—Agreed.

Votes of Thanks.—The following votes of thanks were passed: To Professor B. J. Marples for his long service as secretary-treasurer; to Dr. Oliver and the management committee of the Dominion Museum for the use of the building; to Dr. Hamilton for arranging the film screening to follow the meeting.

A film of the gannet colonies at Cape Kidnappers taken by Professor McMeekan was screened by Dr. Hamilton. Dr. Wodzicki introduced the screening.

NOTES ON TWO MIGRANT WADERS NEAR AUCKLAND

By R. B. SIBSON, Auckland.

Such scant notice do Lesser Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*) and Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) receive in the ornithological literature of New Zealand that they would seem to be either rather rare or else rather elusive. As the two species are often found together along one stretch of coast where I have had opportunities for watching them, I have thought it worth while to collect these few notes together in the hope that other observers may be encouraged to keep closer watch in localities which are visited by trans-equatorial migrants. Messrs. H. R. McKenzie, C. A. Fleming and P. C. Bull have kindly put their notes at my disposal.

These observations have been made mostly in Manukau Harbour, between Wiri Creek and Puketutu Flats, where both species occur regularly in autumn; and in the Firth of Thames near Miranda, where both are curiously infrequent. In our spring (their autumn) the two species are scarce and hard to find; and in some years spring passes without their being seen at all.

TURNSTONES.

These seem to arrive mostly by ones or twos or in very small flocks, from mid-September onwards. Some typical spring records are:—

Manukau 11 on 20/9/36 (C.A.F.)	Muriwai 2 on 17/11/41
1 on 26/11/41	Miranda 1 on 27/10/41
2 on 30/9/45	1 on 8/10/44 (H.R.M.)
16 on 14/11/45	3 on 5/11/44
Mangawai 7 on 24/11/40	

The behaviour of stragglers is worth noting. The single bird of 26/11/41 was firmly attached to a small flock of Golden Plover; that of 27/10/41 dropped out of the blue on to a beach where Stilts and Banded Dotterels were nesting and an immature Red-breasted Dotterel was summering. Its reception was not altogether cordial. It flew but was shortly attracted down by a fresh-water pool. Here more nesting Stilts showed signs of hostility. It flew again and disappeared in a southerly direction. The Turnstone of 8/10/44 had joined a flock of summering Wrybills and may have spent some months with them, for one was seen in the same company on 2/1/45. The two Turnstones of 30/9/45 were with the rare Dotterel (*Charadrius leschenaulti*) on the edge of a big pack of Godwits, recently arrived; ten days later the Dotterel was apart by itself, and the Turnstones, presumably the same two, were feeding among the Godwits on the falling tide.

It seems clear that most of our Turnstones and Golden Plover after arriving move south. (The two species have recently been reported together from the subantarctic islands.) However, a few linger near Auckland about midsummer. On 4/1/36 C.A.F. saw a large mixed flock in Manukau; and on 10/1/44 P.C.B. found 33 Turnstones and a flock in the same place a fortnight later contained 64 birds. By this time the northward movement of S.L. Pied Oystercatcher (*H. o finschi*) and Wrybill is in full swing, and some of these Turnstones may have travelled

from the south in their company. There are two January records for Miranda—three on 2/1/44, and one on 2/1/45.

There is a striking contrast at least in Manukau, between spring and autumn numbers of Turnstones. The biggest flocks are found in March and April. According to Buller, Cheeseman, in 1880, when Turnstones were "exceptionally abundant" in Manukau, encountered a flock of over a thousand; but the date is not given. No such numbers have been encountered in recent years, for which the biggest counts are:

1940	c.60	March 17th—28th
1941	c.65	March 9th.
1942	c.84	March 12th (c.80 were still present on April 8)
1943	c.75	March 1st.
1944	c.70	March 18th
1945	c.85	April 3rd.

By mid-April the flocks are smaller. e.g., 25 on 19/4/42; 50 on 14/4/43; c.36 on 17/4/44; and a few birds in poor plumage may linger into May. P.C.B. has the only recorded occurrence, 14 on 2/5/41; but none could be found on the next day or on subsequent visits. There are, therefore, no Manukau records between 3rd May and 20th September, nor is it for lack of looking. The autumn flocks usually contain a fair sprinkling of birds with the white heads of nuptial plumage, but there is a marked absence of sexual excitement and no sign of pairing. Probably the last birds to leave are immature and will only perform a partial migration, getting no further than the tropical islands of the Pacific.

In February or March Turnstone flocks of some size appear in this part of Manukau quite suddenly; and from then on till their departure day by day they follow the same ritual. With them Golden Plover are usually to be found, the two species feeding together along the line of the tide, loosely strung out and resting together at full-tide in a fairly compact flock. Their first choice for a resting-place is a lava-strewn foreshore where they are remarkably invisible. If disturbed by human interference or pushed off by a high tide, the flock moves 400 yards or so and settles on a mud-cum-sand flat thinly sprinkled with shells. Here again protective colouration is most effective, and on a dull day only a trained eye would spot them. Only as a last resort and most unwillingly, it seems, for they are quick to leave, do they make for a spit or some rocks which in autumn are dominated usually by great numbers of Godwits, Knots and Stilts. When driven from their second resting-place, they generally head back to the first, and if conditions have again become suitable, resettle there.

I have mentioned the behaviour of these composite flocks at full-tide in some detail because it is a performance which is repeated year by year down to the nearest yard. When they fly on to the second resting-place there is usually a wide expanse of flat on which they may alight; and yet the same small piece of it is chosen, I might almost say, without fail. The autumn association of Turnstones and Golden Plover is most marked. In Manukau, at least, the two species seem almost inseparable.

GOLDEN PLOVER.

The few spring records would seem to show that these arrive rather later than Turnstones. My earliest date is 22nd October. The few available records are:—

Manukau	6 on 12/11/41	Firth of Thames	2 on 22/10/44
”	7 on 14/11/45	”	” 3 on 31/10/43
”	9 on 14/12/39		

Stead (Trans. Royal Society N.Z.) mentions that two Golden Plover flew on board his ship when he was crossing the Tasman in the third week of October, 1907. By themselves, Golden Plover are usually wild and wary. Two seen at Kaiarau on 31/10/43 on the west coast of the Firth of Thames were an exception. They were quiet and accessible, and evidently tired after their long journey, for they were seen twice in the same place with an interval of five hours between visits. It was not the sort of place where one would expect to find them, a rather exposed promontory with a beach of large rounded stones. They were never far from the water's edge. On the same day another Golden Plover was found on a freshwater pool. On this same pool on 20/10/44 two Golden Plover were forced down by a heavy rainstorm as they were passing down the coast. As soon as the weather cleared they moved on southwards. These are the only two occasions when I have seen Golden Plover in New Zealand on fresh water, although it must be conceded that this pool lies immediately behind the beach. Indeed, at the time of writing the tide had broken in and the pool is now brackish. On 14/11/45 a mixed flock contained 7 Golden Plover and 16 Turnstones.

After the new year, Golden Plover are more in evidence, but never in my experience are they as numerous as Turnstones. During the last six years I have counted many mixed flocks, the biggest containing about 100 birds, with the Turnstones outnumbering the Golden Plover by roughly 4 to 1. C.A.F. once saw a mixed flock of about 150 birds with Turnstone predominating. The largest party of Golden Plover I have seen contained about 28 birds; and the best counts over six years are 22 on 17/3/40; 28 on 23/3/41; 22 on 12/3/42; 16 on 15/2/43 (none were seen this year in March and April); 22 on 18/3/44; 15 on 20/3/45.

My earliest date for Golden Plover in nuptial plumage is 2/3/44, when out of a flock of 19, one was in almost full breeding dress and two showed the blackening of the throat and underparts well advanced. Birds showing black are always in a minority; but as their spring approaches, it is possible to note an increase in the proportion of "black" birds, i.e., 6 out of 18 on 7/4/41, 5 out of 10 on 14/4/42, 6 out of 12 on 3/4/45. On the whole, Golden Plover leave Manukau earlier than Turnstones. I have only one record after mid-April, three birds, which, to judge by their plumage, were immature non-breeders, on 17/4/44.

When Golden Plover are most abundant in the portion of Manukau Harbour under observation, Banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) are also present in considerable numbers. As the tide comes in, these regularly fly inland to pastures where the grass is short, or to arable, some half-mile from the shore. The same fields are frequented year after

year. During six autumns I have never known Golden Plover to desert the shore and go with them. I was, therefore, very interested when D. A. Urquhart, a member of the King's College Bird Club, told me that at Karaka on the south side of Manukau and about eight miles as the crow flies from Puketutu, he had been seeing larger birds among the Banded Dotterels which are in the habit of visiting the closely-cropped paddocks. In company with him I visited the locality on 10/2/46. When we arrived the tide was dead-low and the Banded Dotterels were busily feeding on the soft muddy flats of Pahurehure Creek, but within sight of the homestead, and well up on open rolling country three-quarters of a mile from the shore was a party of 12 Golden Plover, conspicuous dark blobs in a pale parched pasture. It was my first experience of *Pluvialis dominica* in such a habitat. I had come to think of our Golden Plovers, at least in Manukau, as almost exclusively birds of the tidal flats. But these birds in the Karaka pastures were on just the type of country where, in Britain, the slightly larger *Pluvialis apricaria* would be found. My informant had noted them several times between January 18th and February 5th, 35 being the greatest number seen. When we put up the twelve birds, they made for the shore, where later we found a typical mixed flock of 33 Turnstones and 25 Golden Plover, none of which showed signs of moulting into nuptial plumage.

P.S.—Since the above account was written (and sent for publication) the statement that in Manukau in autumn “the two species seem almost inseparable” has been corroborated in a rather surprising way. D. A. Urquhart assured me that he had sometimes seen with the Golden Plover in the Karaka paddocks over half a mile from the shore, birds that were smaller and rather black, and he believed they were Turnstones. On 3/3/46, at his invitation, I again visited the locality. When we arrived, the tide was full. A mixed flock of 15 Golden Plover, 40 plus Turnstones and 2 Banded Dotterels was quickly found near the homestead. (The main body of Banded Dotterels was later found in another paddock.) One Golden Plover was in almost complete breeding dress, and some were unevenly marked with black about the lower breast. (cf. supra. 2/3/44.) But what was perhaps most interesting was that several of the Turnstones were not content with merely resting there. They were seen to move away from the main flock and start feeding, flicking over the sheep-droppings just as if they were foraging among the tide-wrack on the seashore.

BLUE DUCK (*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus*) in Bay of Plenty.— I saw three on 23/2/46 in Takaputahi River (flows into Motu River), 20 miles north of Toatoa, which is 20 miles east of Opotiki. The river here is almost inaccessible and is a swift stream cut in the rock in a continuous gorge, at an elevation of about 800 feet. The ducks were comparatively tame. They swam about in an inquisitive way and preened themselves on the boulders. Their plumage looked fresh and attractive. A local settler said the Blue Duck population on a three-mile length of the Takaputahi River in his neighbourhood was 20 to 30 and in spite of new clutches each year the number remained stable, for what reason he could not say.—Norman Potts.

BREEDING HABITS OF STARLINGS.

By HORNBY SCHOOL, CANTERBURY.

Breeding Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) have been under observation by the pupils of Hornby School, Canterbury. Observation was assisted by means of a periscope. During September and October the birds were seen constantly visiting the nest site, though little quarrelling took place. On October 18, 1944, a starling was sitting on four eggs.

Next morning, at 8 o'clock, the box enclosing the nest was turned round once to bring the nest into full view of the periscope. The north-west corner now became the south-west corner. The bird had been away for a morning stretch at this time. Its return was watched from a distance, out of sight. The bird landed on the step outside the entrance hole, from which it could command a view of the inside nest. As far as a bird can express a feeling by outer actions it showed a kind of frozen awe. Sitting perfectly still where it had landed, it turned its head smartly to look in, then out—in, out—in, out—in, out, in perfect petrified astonishment. It sat there for four minutes by the watch uttering a single cry at intervals of "Jit! Jit!", as though the puzzle could not be solved. Then it flew to the opposite building to look at the entrance from a distance. It then returned to the step, entered, but turned round immediately, as its yellow beak could be seen just inside the entrance. In a short time it came half out with its tail and body inside. After much hesitation it settled down on the nest, but was doubly sensitive from then on, coming off at the slightest sound of a footfall on the asphalt outside. So the bird sat under "jumpy" conditions as the children were constantly passing except in the actual school hours.

This nest was unsuccessful, a weak chick, which hatched on November 1, died and was found on the asphalt the next day, while the remaining eggs disappeared two days later. Then commenced a contest among three pairs of starlings as to which should own the nest. The cock bird of the first pair was kept very busily employed keeping out all newcomers. The opposing hen birds seemed to give him most trouble, as they would try persistently to take possession of the nest.

November 5.—Through the periscope two cock birds were seen to be fighting so fiercely that they were easily caught in one handful. Even then they fought each other if allowed. They were marked. When liberated, one flew right away but the other settled on the school. After that all competition ceased and two birds seemed to take up residence. One was seen to sit deep in the nest and vigorously kick out its legs backwards as a duck does when swimming. This deepened the nest and rounded it. Laying commenced as follows:—November 10, 1 egg; Nov. 11, 3 eggs; Nov. 12, 5 eggs; Nov. 13, 6 eggs. (One bird began to sit about this time, but another was about outside.) Nov. 14, 7 eggs; Nov. 15, 8 eggs. By this time it was quite obvious that two hen birds were laying in the same nest while no cock birds were seen singing on the roof outside. Since the capture and marking of the cock birds, they seemed to have left the vicinity. Judging by their activities on the days preceding their capture their duty must have been to keep guard

over the nest to prevent others than their own mates from entering. The two hens remaining must have taken dual possession, with no apparent quarrelling between them, though one seemed to be the ruler. As one was seen to be sitting almost continuously since November 13, the other must have slipped in during the former's absence to go on laying after the first had finished. The sitting bird had some difficulty in covering all the eggs and frequently she would take up a better position, working herself down among them. She still remained very sensitive, flying off at the slightest noise outside.

On November 21 another egg was laid, making a total of 9. On November 25 two chicks hatched (13 days), and on November 26, two more. Feeding began that day. She would feed two and then nestle down on all for five minutes, when she would be off for more food. On November 27 at least five chicks were seen. Feeding now went on regularly while the children from all classes watched the process. On November 28 the children reported that two birds were sharing in the feeding. This was later verified. As no marked male birds had been seen since November 5, the two must be hens, which together laid the final count of nine eggs. Whether the warmth of the chicks would be sufficient to hatch the remaining eggs (laid over a period of nine days) had yet to be seen. That both birds were females seemed certain owing to their cries, attitude and lack of any song. They both seemed to bring food about the same time, one waiting for the other to come out, not, as would be expected, at alternate intervals. On November 29, two Form II. children watched the feeding process for 45 minutes through the periscope. In that period the young were fed 16 times, an average of one feeding every three minutes. On November 30 the unhatched eggs had disappeared.

On December 5 at 7 a.m., a great upset was noticed among the birds in the vicinity of the nest. The morning was grey and overcast. Investigation showed a little Owl (*Athene noctua*) perched a few yards from the entrance of the nest. It allowed itself to be closely approached before flying away, closely mobbed by all the starlings in the vicinity. After that the parent birds refused to enter the nest, though they were carrying food. They constantly came near, peered in at the entrance, but flew away again, calling out loudly in distress or in warning. An investigation of the nest disclosed that there were only three young ones remaining. These seemed scared, not calling aloud for food at the slightest noise as was usual. The parents refused to enter again for some time. At this stage it was only a matter of conjecture whether the owl had robbed the nest or not, but circumstantial evidence seemed against it.

At 4 p.m. on the same day the owl was again sitting on the fence close to the nest. Again all the surrounding birds were in an uproar. After being chased away, the owl returned repeatedly till dusk, when rain was falling heavily. Each time the parent starlings made a great din, sitting often a foot or two on either side of the owl. When it flew away, they were scared to enter the nest. They would peer in at all angles before again commencing feeding. That night a trap was set. At 5 o'clock next morning the owl's presence was indicated by much

commotion, as before. The owl had visited the nest but the trap had failed. Near the entrance blood was seen, while one more fat nestling was gone. On the next night, when the trap was again set, the owl again entered. The two remaining chicks were pulled to the outer edge of the nest, being killed, one with two claw holes in the upper part of the head, while the other one's head had been crushed as though by the owl's beak. The trap again failed. After this, the starlings left the surroundings. No birds had approached the nest site this summer (up to the end of January, 1945).

REACTION OF SMALL BIRDS TO LITTLE OWL.—Small birds, especially blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) are excessively annoyed by the presence of the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*). The blackbirds approach to within a few feet or hop round on the ground, uttering piercing cries. On several occasions a blackbird has been seen to swoop at an owl, dislodging it from its perch. No young birds have been seen in the 1944 season where usually there are plenty. The owls have a nest high up in a shingle pit across the road. They have been seen flying along the trees from pole to pole, listening for the squeaking of young birds in their nests. Two nests of hedge sparrows (*Prunella modularis*) in a macrocarpa hedge close to a house were robbed in one afternoon. The adult hedge-sparrows were heard uttering plaintive notes.—Hornby School, Canterbury.

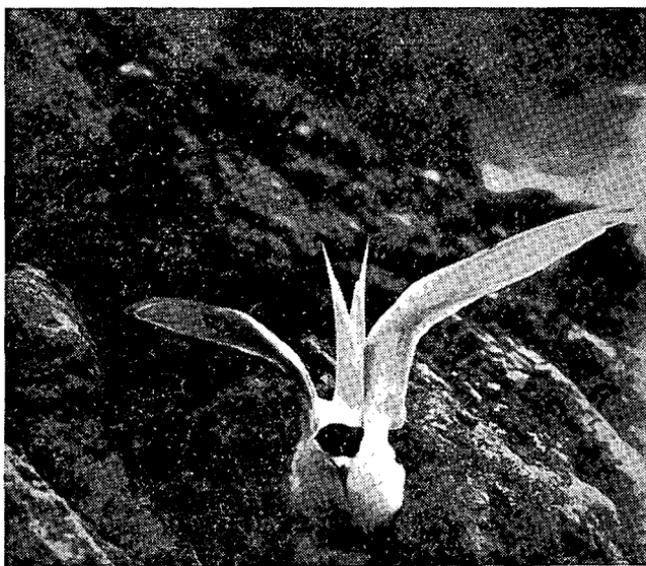


Photo: A. S. Wilkinson.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN (*Sterna striata*) settling on nest,
Kapiti Island.

MAGPIES IN NEW ZEALAND.

By L. W. McCASKILL, Lincoln College, Christchurch.

Further notes on the Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca* and *G. tibicen*) in New Zealand are (vide N.Z. Bird Notes, Vol. 1, p. 86-104):—

WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE.

Distribution.—Hanmer Basin: Common. Tarndale Homestead, Marlborough: Fairly regular summer visitors. Hundalee: Apparently well established.

Attacks on Sheep.—At Beckenham Hills, North Canterbury, the following incidents have been reported: "A farmer who had attended to a cast sheep, went next day to see how it was. He found a flock of nearly 50 magpies pulling at its wool, which was scattered about. The sheep had been pecked round the eye but was not dead. Two days later a sick sheep near a plantation was attacked and the wool pulled out by magpies."

Magpies and Bumble Bees.—At Annat, Canterbury, a pet magpie regularly catches and kills bumble bees in the garden. A farmer in the same district has seen magpies kill bumble bees on at least six occasions. Twice he has watched magpies standing beside a bumble-bee nest and take the young bees as they came out into the sun to dry their wings. At Amberley, North Canterbury, a farmer has frequently seen magpies kill bumble-bees. Other farmers have expressed the opinion that magpies may be a factor in reducing yields of red clover by destroying old queens in the spring and thus preventing the natural increase.

Magpies and Keas.—From the upper reaches of the Waiau, North Canterbury, and from the Lake Coleridge district, come reports that Keas do not approach areas where Magpies are established.

BLACK-BACKED MAGPIE.

Distribution.—The writer saw a single cock bird at Monoti, near Cheviot, in October, 1945, and another near Culverden, in December, 1945. A reliable observer reported four birds up the Waiau River, between Montrose and Lochiel in 1945.

SHINING CUCKOOS IN GARDEN.—For two weeks prior to and up to 20/2/46 Shining Cuckoos (*Chalcites lucidus*) appeared in a garden in Opotiki. On several occasions five were feeding together on caterpillars in a kowhai tree. They were comparatively tame.—Norman Potts.

NEW BREEDING BIRD FOR THREE KINGS GROUP.—One of the most interesting ornithological discoveries of recent years was that by an Auckland War Memorial Museum party which visited the Three Kings group, where the Black-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma nigripennis*) hitherto recorded in the New Zealand area from the Kermadecs, was found to be breeding on the Great King. An illustration of this bird and of other species, and views taken by Mr. G. A. Buddle, a member of our Society, appeared in the "Weekly News" on April 24, 1946.

A NEW RED-BILLED GULL COLONY.

By J. M. CUNNINGHAM.

A visit was made to the Red-billed Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) colony at Te Awaite, on the East Coast, on the 22nd and 23rd December, 1945, by the writer and R. A. Daniell. It was found that there were two colonies, both on rocky islands a few yards offshore, on an otherwise unbroken coastline. The more southerly is inaccessible except for a few minutes at dead low tide, on the calmest days, and is of considerable size; an estimate of c. 400 birds probably being too low. Nests were seen to be on ledges on the steep slopes, and the gulls appeared to have the place to themselves except for 10 White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*) which were resting on rocky outcroppings.

The other colony is much smaller and more accessible, being connected with the mainland at low tide. It is flatter, lower, and has grassy patches together with areas of ice-plant (unidentified), used for nest building. On the evening of the 22nd there was only one chick, still wet, but six more hatched during the following morning, and nine more eggs were then chipping. There were 20 nests containing a single egg or chick; 27 with two, and three with three eggs or chicks. In addition there was a nest containing three eggs, one of which hatched, but some of these may have rolled in from above, as there were five others half in the nest, obviously accidental—A total of 51 nests. There were also 74 incomplete nests, and a certain amount of casual building appeared to be going on, though there were not sufficient birds present to account for more than a dozen empty nests. Either these birds were away feeding, or the nests were never intended for use, a point which requires investigation.

One or two notes seem worth recording. One bird walked to a nest containing an egg which it deliberately, though clumsily, prodded with the tip of its bill, obviously trying to pierce it. This failed, however, and the bird then toyed with the nesting material, eventually walking away. It was noticed that when a bird, not sitting on a nest, began to play with nesting material, others, similarly unoccupied, followed suit, and on these occasions sitting birds protested vigorously on their approach, evidently anticipating robbery with violence. When these unoccupied birds were not playing with material, they were allowed to wander unmolested amongst sitting birds. A chick, under 24 hours old, was seen to be fed on about three teaspoonsful of a dark, slimy, greenish food. The chick gulped it down readily while it was issuing from the parent's bill, but made no attempt to pick it up from the edge of the nest. The surplus was eaten by the parent. Birds were seen to change places on the nest.

Several burrows were found, containing one or two dead gulls, which had been eaten on the back of the neck, and an egg was found in one. The burrows were about 20 feet from the nearest nests, and contained a little grass at the ends, but apparently had no occupants at that time.

REVIEW.

“HOW TO STUDY BIRDS.”—Stuart Smith, B.Sc., Ph.D.

(Collins, 1945, 10/3 all booksellers.)

This book should be on the shelves of every bird watcher in New Zealand, whether serious study is carried out or not. The first part deals with a year in the life of a typical European migrant. Chapters include discussions on the dates, path (“broad fronts” and “fixed routes”), extent, and reasons for this yearly migration, and the significance of territory to a bird. The chief merit of this readable book is that it includes summaries of all the most recent discoveries in the bird world, and brings the reader up to date. Such subjects as “brood-spots” are fully discussed, and an interesting point is “. . . the mere presence of a male bird on the nest should not necessarily be taken to mean that the bird is incubating the eggs in the sense that it is contributing to the development of the embryo. Thus in certain cases, such as the blackbird, where the hen bird normally does all the incubation, it has been found that in isolated cases where the cock bird has been found covering the eggs, **these were quite cold** * when the bird was flushed from the nest. (* Heavy type mine.—J.M.C.) No brood spots are developed by the male blackbird, and the suggestion is that such birds are incapable of truly incubating eggs. . . records of the male on the nest should not be treated as necessarily indicative of incubation.”

Winter flocking is discussed, and the suggestion is made that more work might be done on the roosting habits of the “social” birds, such as starlings, rooks, sparrows. Dewar’s 20-10 seconds diving rule for duck is explained and inheritance and imitation in young birds receive a well-merited chapter to themselves.

The rest of the book deals with special problems in more detail, and contains interesting charts and diagrams on such subjects as ringed bird recoveries of partial migrants (thrushes, blackbirds, etc. offer scope in New Zealand for similar studies). The eye is of all importance to a bird, and for that reason is treated in great detail, with explanations and diagrams of the functional parts. The reason for a bird’s great keenness of sight becomes simple when the chapter is read, as do its colour reactions. (Many readers will be surprised to learn that some birds can see all round them at once.) A further chapter is included on the design of a bird’s wing, and the book includes a great many suggestions for bird watchers.

Not the least important section is the list of references, which is remarkable for its range, and the admirable photographs by the author, Eric Hosking, F.R.P.S. and A. G. Brittan are not used simply as “pretty pictures” but each has the specific use of illustrating a particular point in the text.—J.M.C.

The “South Australian Ornithologist” for March, 1946, Vol. XVIII., No. 1, includes a paper by E. F. Boehm on “Distraction Display by Breeding Birds in South Australia.”

ABOUT OUR MEMBERS.

Dr. K. A. Wodzicki and Mr. J. M. Cunningham recently spent a weekend at Porangahau, to complete a visit to this area in every season of the year. They have in hand a paper dealing with the bird life of the district.

Among those attending the society's annual meeting in Wellington was Mr. H. L. Secker, who has returned from service overseas, where he had interesting experiences with the birds of Italy and Egypt.

Members will regret to hear of the recent illness of Mr. L. E. Richdale and will join in wishing him a speedy and complete recovery.

A pleasing feature of the annual meeting was the presence of several members from a distance, these including Dr. R. A. Falla (Christchurch), Messrs. R. B. Sibson (Auckland), J. M. Cunningham and E. O. Welch (Masterton) and H. T. Wenham (Levin). There was a good representation of Wellington members.

Several members did wartime duties on the meteorological stations established in the Auckland and Campbell Islands. These included Dr. R. A. Falla (Christchurch), Messrs. C. A. Fleming (Wellington), E. G. Turbot (Auckland) and J. H. Sorenson (Invercargill). Some notable ornithological information was obtained.

Members will congratulate Mr. Peter Bull, of Auckland, on his marriage, which took place following on his return after serving in the Navy during the war.

Members of the Society are appreciative of the sterling service given by Dr. R. A. Falla as president, and by Professor B. J. Marples, as secretary, and also as co-editors of "Bird Notes," from the inception of the Society, in 1939, until 1946. Practically the whole burden of running the society in that period fell on their shoulders.

Members having notes for the classified list are requested to send them to their district organiser before July 31.

Copies of the "Emu," and of other bird literature, can be obtained on loan from the hon. secretary, Mr. J. M. Cunningham, 39 Renall Street, Masterton. Members should send stamps to cover the cost of postage.

Members are invited to send contributions to "Bird Notes," addressed to the Editor, 114 Cole Street, Masterton.

Readers are invited to offer suggestions for the improvement of "Bird Notes."

OCCURRENCE OF MYNA (*Acrodothores tristis*) AT FOXTON.—On 30/1/45 I saw two Mynas in the grounds of the maternity hospital at Foxton. There has been a pair of these birds in that locality (Lady's Mile) for the past three years. They are the only birds of this species I have ever seen throughout the district southward from there to Paekakariki.—A. A. Savell, Levin.

KNOT (*Tringa canutus*) **INLAND**.—It is seldom that the Knot is reported in an inland locality in New Zealand. On February 4, 1945, one was seen feeding with stilts in shallow water, about two inches deep, on the north-eastern shores of Lake Wairarapa, at a point about 20 miles from the sea. The bird was watched from a distance of not more than 20 feet and even at that distance it continued feeding, keeping its head down, with its bill in the water for minutes at a time. The bill was held more or less vertical while feeding. Its bill, slightly longer than the head, was straight and black; the legs, rather short, were dark brown; the back, slate grey, browner on the lower portion and mottled; there was a brownish, almost black, edge to the folded primaries; the chest, head and neck were flecked slaty; the underparts white; the flanks barred brownish slate and white; there was a slight, whitish eyebrow; a darker line through the eye, and the tail was barred. When it flew, a white rump became conspicuous. The sharp call on the ground resembles "ee-yick," the second syllable higher pitched than the first; in flight it uttered "gwit." In size it was slightly larger than the banded dotterel.—J. M. Cunningham, Masterton.

STARLING AS A PET.—At Opua, Mrs. M. A. E. Deeming writes, three starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) chicks hatched on December 6, 1944. Twelve days later the young were deserted. Two were dead when found and the third was brought home and hand fed on grass grubs, huhu grubs and wetas. The bird became a great pet and learnt to talk when it was about 4½ months old. It was also a good singer and mimicked the notes of other birds. A greensfinch (*Chloris chloris*) caught as an adult, lived in captivity for 12 years.



Photo: A. S. Wilkinson.

GREY DUCK (*Anas superciliosa*) incubating, Kapiti Island.

BIRD LIFE IN KAIMANAWA RANGES.—I go deerstalking in the Kaimanawa Ranges, south of Lake Taupo, and during a recent visit there I saw the following birds: Kiwi (two nests with eggs), rifleman, robin, pied fantail, bush hawk (all plentiful); pigeon (quite a number), kaka (few), morepork, silver-eye and among introduced birds, the magpie (one seen at an altitude of 4,000ft.); Californian quail, pheasant, and black-bird (the latter bird very plentiful). Kiwi tracks were seen at 4,000ft., but no nests were higher than 2000ft. The birds were heard calling at night. Traces of rats were seen at 3,000ft., and several stoats were seen in the bush.—Magnus Johnson, Auckland.

Two white swans (*Cygnus olor*) were killed recently by a Wallingford farmer, who was fined £2 10s. on June 19, in the Waipukurau Magistrate's Court. He said the swans had become a nuisance to ducks and eygnets on his dam.

An interesting discovery, three imprints of a moa's foot or claw, was made recently near the mouth of the Waiwakaiho Stream, Fitzroy, New Plymouth, by Mr. Joseph Iorns. After a flood and a spring tide, which washed off sand and timber from a shelf of brown swamp sludge and sand formation, three good footprints were laid bare, all the same size, twelve inches by 8½ inches, in a line, about six feet apart. The ground was too soft to allow the footprints to be cut out, so Mr. Iorns mixed some fine concrete and filled in the imprints. The next tide covered them again, and more recently one of the footprints was exposed once more and was cut out by Mr. Iorns. He presented it to the museum at New Plymouth. The concrete saved the imprint from scouring out, and it is the intention of the museum people to lift it out to show the original impression.

A full grown kiwi (presumably *Apteryx mantelli*) was discovered by a Matamata farmer on June 19, in a haystack on his property, which is three miles from the Kaimai Ranges. Residents of the locality state that the kiwi is increasing in numbers in that area.

The silver-eye was very plentiful on Great Barrier Island in the summer of 1944-45, reports Mr. Magnus Johnson, of Auckland.

The Society is indebted to Mr. A. S. Wilkinson for the loan of the blocks used in this issue.

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