

THE EASTERN ROSELLA (*Platycercus eximius*) IN NORTH AUCKLAND.

By C. A. FLEMING.

Oliver (1930) gives "Waitakerei Range" as the distribution in New Zealand of this parakeet, which entered the fauna as a "cage escape." At present (1944) the distribution is more extensive and reports from the periphery of the range suggest that the bird may still be advancing. For that reason this note is recorded. The bird has long been established in the Waitakerei area, from Titirangi to Muriwai. I have no reports from south of Manukau Harbour, and the closely settled Auckland isthmus has apparently prevented its spread S.E., though there have been occasional records from eastern suburbs (S.D.P.). I have no records from the North Shore Peninsula south of Dairy Flat, but from there west to Kaukapakapa the bird is common, and there appears to be continuity south to Kumeu and Henderson. Throughout the area bounded by the Kaipara to the west, I found the rosella abundant as far north as Tauhoa, Wellsford, and Warkworth between July, 1943, and January, 1944, and Mr S. D. Potter has records from Leigh on the East Coast, though local observers there do not report its presence, and it is not yet a permanent resident. It seems absent from the South Kaipara Heads peninsula (R. B. Sibson), from Okahukura Pen., from the Kaiwaka-Maungaturoto area, and from Pahi and Huketere Peninsulas (C.A.F.), and was absent, at least until a few years ago, from east coast localities north of Leigh. At Silverdale and Tahekeroa, both now well within the range, residents report that the bird was rare or absent four to six years ago.

The range includes native bush, *Pinus* plantations, farming and orchard land with frequent relics of bush or planted shelter belts, and gumlands, usually with some pines. The birds occur in conspicuous and noisy flocklets or in pairs, so that any further spread in range should not be hard to record, even on rapid journeys through the country.

THE RED-BILLED GULL IN DUNEDIN.

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Having noticed that a varying number of gulls visited our school grounds during the previous year, we became interested in their habits, and in 1943 decided to tabulate their attendance. Our classroom is on the top floor of a two-storeyed building and the windows overlook a flat, grassy playground of about $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres. In wet weather this area is too soft and soggy for children to play on, and it was usually under these conditions that we saw the most gulls.

First of all, we drew up a chart which was divided into four columns. The first was reserved for the date, the second for the number of gulls, the third for a weather record on the previous night, and the fourth for comments. The project commenced on March 31,

and the gulls were counted at 9.30 a.m. each school day. Owing to the infantile paralysis we had to miss a period between April 21 and May 5.

Till April 21 the ground was very hard and dry, and there was very little rain. The number of birds at this time ranged from 0 to 11 daily, with an average of 3.5.

In the winter term when the soil became soft the gulls were very numerous and were noticeably more common when we returned to school on May 17. By the second week, which was wet, a total of 147 was counted for the five days. The third week was frosty and fine, resulting in only 65 being present; this was the procedure throughout the whole term. Heavy rain the night before caused birds to arrive, and they remained as long as the ground stayed soft. During frost the numbers were greatly reduced.

The greatest daily number was 76 on July 26, after a very wet week-end. The very frosty three days from August 9 to 11 did not produce a single bird.

On foggy mornings there were very few till the fog lifted. For example, on July 13, when the playing area was enveloped in misty rain, there were 12 birds at 9.30 a.m. and 41 at 11 o'clock, by which time it had cleared.

The birds displayed a tendency to face the wind when feeding. They usually landed near that part of the ground farthest from the wind and walked towards the opposite end.

The third term began on September 7, and for the whole of that session not one gull landed on the grass. This occurred even though it was very wet in September and most of October, causing the ground to become quite soft.

In the sub-joined table is given the results of the daily observations grouped into school weeks:—

Date.	No. of Days.	No. of Gulls.	Average.
March 30 to April 2	4	12	3.0
April 5 to April 9	5	23	4.6
April 12 to April 16	5	20	4.0
April 19 to April 21	3	5	1.7
End of 1st Term.			
May 17 to May 21	5	51	10.2
May 24 to May 28	5	147	29.4
May 31 to June 4	5	65	13.0
June 8 to June 11	3	92	30.7
June 14 to June 18	5	70	14.0
June 21 to June 25	5	160	32.0
June 28 to July 2	5	91	18.2
July 6 to July 7	2	15	7.5
July 12 to July 16	5	98	19.6
July 19 to July 23	5	114	22.8
July 26 to July 29	4	146	38.7
August 2 to August 6	5	63	12.2
August 9 to August 11	3	0	0.0
August 16 to August 20	5	40	8.0
End 2nd Term.			
September 7 to December 16	73	0	0