

#### 4.—Southern Skua (*Catharacta skua lonnbergi*).

The August storm brought to Muriwai beach two individuals of this species, the normal associate of southern petrel breeding colonies. Although numbers of skuas apparently spend the non-breeding season at sea, they are unusual storm waifs in the Auckland district. On August 23, E.G.T., in company with Messrs. T. W. Cox and R. Mann, recorded the two birds. One, a young bird in dark plumage, was flying rather unsteadily about the beach, harried constantly by black-backed gulls. The other was lying dead a few hundred yards away in the dry sand above high water mark. It proved on dissection to be a young female; the plumage is much darker than in breeding birds, and tinged with rufous. The stomach contained only shells of *Spirula* and a small goose-barnacle. It seems probable that both birds came ashore alive, but were prevented by the black-backed gulls from feeding upon the fresh petrel bodies littering the beach. The other bird may also have become a casualty.

Earlier in the year, on April 28, the body of a southern skua was found on the beach by P. C. Bull.

#### REFERENCES.

1. Murphy, R. C., "The Oceanic Birds of South America," 1936.
2. Falla, R. A., "The Genus *Pachyptila* Illiger," *Emu*, October, 1940.
3. Fleming, C. A., "The Phylogeny of the Prions," *Emu*, October, 1941.
4. Richdale, L. E., "The Parara or Broad-billed Prion, *Pachyptila vittata* (Gmelin)," *Emu*, January, 1944.

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DABCHICK INVESTIGATION.—Members are urged to make every effort to visit lakes and pools, particularly those off the beaten track, to count and seek dabchicks (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*). Mr. R. B. Sibson, Auckland, who is investigating the status of the dabchick in New Zealand, is anxious to obtain all possible data as to the presence and numbers of this bird. Information concerning the dabchick is particularly scarce from the South Island.

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SKUAS ROBBING RED-BILLED GULLS.—It is quite a common thing on our coast to see Arctic Skuas (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) chasing and robbing white-fronted terns (*Sterna striata*), and occasionally they chase Caspian terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*), but it is only on two occasions that we have seen one victimise a red-billed gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*). On 17/3/46, while fishing, we were attended by a red-billed gull, which swallowed several pieces of eel bait which were thrown to it. Suddenly a skua swooped in and chased the gull, which squawked harshly as it hurried off in frantic dodging flight. It dropped two pieces of bait, one of which the skua caught in the air. The second piece it took from the water, then hurried after the gull again and made it disgorge yet another piece of bait. How did it know that the gull still had a third piece? On 14/4/46 at the same fishing ground on the Clevedon coast another skua chased a red-billed gull and was successful in obtaining, second-hand, some of our surplus bait. The bird was a different skua on each occasion, as one was dark and the other had white under the wings.—H. R. McKenzie and P. H. Orum, Clevedon.