

Since 1924 I have kept a general look-out for gannets arriving in Wellington Harbour, my observations being made from the Khandallah Hills. Odd birds may be seen diving in May and June; but generally most gannets arrive in July and August. Some years only one or two birds appear and never more than two can be seen at one time. The main diving ground seems to be about half a mile from the shore off the Kaiwarra-Ngahauranga section of the railway line. Water in this area is from 10 to 11 fathoms deep.

The last large flock of gannets noted in Wellington Harbour was in 1944, when numerous birds were diving far out in the harbour. This was in the latter winter months. Some of these birds must have been diving in very deep water—or perhaps the shoals were being kept at the surface by sharks and other predatory fish. More gannets dive early in the morning than later in the day. This diving habit seldom continues to any great extent for more than a few successive days and is quite erratic depending on the migrations of the shoals.

It is curious that the gannets do not seem to dive to take the estuary mullet, *Agonostomus forsteri* (called herring in the North Island). There are large shoals of these mullet constantly on the move close inshore in the relatively shallow water of the harbour. Shags select large specimens only. The pilchard is apparently a fish that is highly esteemed by more creatures than man. For many of the larger fishes, fishermen prefer to have it for bait, and the gannets add their preference.

WHIMBREL IN NORTH ISLAND.

(a) 14/9/42. A whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*) was examined on the deck of an overseas vessel at Auckland. It had come aboard in the Tasman Sea south of Lord Howe Island. It fed readily on scraps of raw meat which were accepted immediately after capture. Exposed portions of the dorsal feathers were markedly frayed and of triangular outline as after migration. (E. G. Turbott.)

(b) A whimbrel has spent some months of the winter in Manukau Harbour. It was first seen on 16/6/46 among godwits, by P. C. Bull. On 28/7/46 P.C.B. and R.B.S. had excellent views of it at a distance of thirty yards in a pack of waders that included godwits, stilts and oyster-catchers. In flight it appeared as rather a darker bird than a godwit in winter plumage, and on the ground its dark spotted chest helped to distinguish it from the godwits. The decurved beak was not always easily discernible, but was particularly well seen once, when as the birds stood on a small rock, its head was silhouetted against smooth water. On 4/8/46 it was again well seen by N. M. Gleeson and R.B.S. It was resting and preening itself on a shell-bank among stilts, and attention was drawn to it at once by its dark chest. For comparison, a party of pale-chested godwits was standing a few yards distant. As the tide dropped, the whimbrel, in company with other waders, moved down to the mud to feed. Eventually it flew off alone, and gave its distinctive call three times, a rippling trill but not at full strength. Like most of the godwits that pass the winter in New Zealand, the bird was almost certainly immature. This seems to be the first time that a whimbrel has been recorded as wintering in New Zealand. It was well seen with a telescope again on 21/8/46 by D. A. Urquhart and the writer. It was noted that the legs were a pale bluish grey. (R. B. Sibson.)

(c) On two successive days, 17 and 18/11/45, I had splendid views of a whimbrel at the mouth of the Ohau River, Manawatu. The bird was first noticed in flight and as it settled near a bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) an excellent opportunity was given to compare its size. It was slightly larger than the godwit, the long down-curved bill did not appear to be quite as long as the godwit's bill; the plumage generally was a mottled brown, with a flecked white rump (v-shaped), blackish tipped wings; a white eyebrow, a dark stripe on top of the head; grey feet and dark bill.

For some five minutes the bird ducked itself in a shallow back-water, splashing its wings and dipping its bill in the water and preening its feathers under its wings. When disturbed it uttered a loud sharp cry of "willy-willy-willy-willy-willy." It was observed at 50 yards distance with eight magnification binoculars.—R. H. D. Stidolph, Masterton.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT IN AUCKLAND PROVINCE.

By R. B. SIBSON.

The Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa limosa haemastica*) now rare even in its native America, has been observed twice this year in the province of Auckland.

(a) Mr. H. R. McKenzie writes that on 10/3/46, near Waitakaruru, in the Firth of Thames, one was seen in a close pack of bar-tailed godwits (*Limosa l. lapponica*) on a mudflat and was carefully watched for over half an hour by Mr. P. H. Orum, Capt. A. T. Edgar and himself. It was a small godwit, showing hardly any colour except for a fully black tail. Its identity was considered quite certain.

(b) On 28/7/46, Mr. P. C. Bull and the writer had close views of one and noted all the diagnostic field characters, on Puketutu Flats, in Manukau Harbour. It was first noticed flying with three bar-tailed godwits, and some sort of chase was in progress with much zig-zagging and exciting calling, but whether in play or in anger was not certain. Fortunately it settled eventually among other waders on a shell-bank, to which there was easy access by way of a lava reef and under the cover of typical salt-marsh vegetation. On the ground its smooth-looking grey breast, clear-cut eyestripe and small size marked the Hudsonian as different from the scores of bar-tailed godwits around it, and when it rose the sharply-defined pattern of white rump and black tail was most conspicuous. Finally, as it flew past at the head of a party of bar-tails, its whitish alar bar showed distinctly. It was a neat godwit about the size of a small male bar-tail.

This record is particularly interesting as it is the first reported winter occurrence of the Hudsonian godwit in New Zealand. The bird was presumably immature, and, like the majority of immature bar-tails, was content to stay here growing up, before attempting the long journey back to its Arctic breeding grounds. It should be in New Zealand at least till March, 1947.

The Hudsonian godwit has now been observed four times in the province of Auckland, these being the only records for the North Island. The two earlier occurrences were reported in "The Emu," 1943, Vol. xliii, p. 136. The first bird was found by W. Ridland and the writer near