

## BIRDS NEAR CROMWELL, OTAGO.

By J. Middleditch, Cromwell.

During the last breeding season there was a small colony of black-billed gulls (*Larus bulleri*) at the Lindus River where it flows into the Clutha. The nests were on a low gravelly delta that is covered by water in flood-time. Eggs were seen on October 20, 1946. Some eggs had hatched on December 8 and half a dozen chicks were on foot. When disturbed these immediately took to the water.

Pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus finschi*), stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) and banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*) appeared to be breeding in the same area, but I could not find any nests. A few terns (probably black-fronted *Chlidonias albigularis*) also were present, but I could not identify them. By their behaviour, they, too, seemed to have nests nearby.

A harrier (*Circus approximans*) had a nest with four young, about 50 yards away. There was no sign of anything but the remains of young rabbits near the nest.

Early in January, 1947, all the gulls' eggs had hatched and the young, still on foot, ran into the long tussock with the old birds hovering around and making a great noise. The young seemed to be in all stages of growth. Some appeared to have been hatched only a few days while others were much older.

I counted 150 nests, eight dead young in nests, and one egg unhatched. I could only count 50 young birds on foot but others may have been in the tussocks.

I have seen altogether six bitterns (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) on the Clutha flats this year. This is much more than usual. For three years one lone bird stayed in the same little swamp but it has disappeared this year.

Pied fantails (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) arrived on the flats about May 5, 1946. Their arrival seems to coincide with bad weather in the high country. White-eyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) appear to arrive about the same time as the fantails but they do not stay.

I found the nest of a pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*) on January 20, 1947, on the flats in the Lindus Valley. It was lined with cow hair and had four eggs. There are quite a number of these birds on the Lindus.

I did not observe the arrival of the banded dotterel in the spring but the earliest chick seen was on 23/10/46. This chick was hatched near the Cromwell-Lowburn Road over which I passed every morning. I think the birds left as soon as the chicks could fly strongly enough, which was early in February.

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BIRD BEHAVIOUR.—The difference in the behaviour of blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and thrushes (*T. ericetorum*) when they manage to find their way into a net-covered strawberry garden is notable. When the blackbird is chased, it always makes for the edges or the corners of the garden, and is easily captured. A thrush, on the other hand, will make for the centre of the strawberry garden and cannot be caught. The cover has to be opened to allow it to escape.—W. Davidson, Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club.