

was seen on the ridges and the species does not seem to have penetrated into the bush as elsewhere in New Zealand. Males were in full song. A nest was found on the leaf of a nikau.

Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).—Perhaps 30-40 about the homestead. Some were nesting in the tall kanuka trees.

Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*).—Found commonly on the flat and a little way into the bush. A nest in the top of a silver tree-fern in Waipawa Gully contained four eggs. Through lack of mud, the nest was lined with a sort of papier-mache of rotten wood mixed with saliva. I have seen a similar nest at c. 700ft. on Rangitoto. Mr. McKenzie found another nest with one broken and two whole eggs, and believes a long-tailed cuckoo was responsible. Away from the flat the only thrush seen was at Tirikakawa. On three occasions thrushes were seen sipping the nectar in pohutukawa flowers just like honey-eaters. No song was heard.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*).—Fairly frequent about the flat, where some males were still singing; and noted also at Tirikakawa and Awaroa.

Hedge sparrow (*Prunella modularis*).—Perhaps four pairs on the flat; but not noted elsewhere. Males were heard singing near Te Titoki Point, in the garden, and the east paddock; and a bird was carrying food near the inland cliffs.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Flocking had begun, c. 24 being greatest number seen together. Birds were often seen around the sea-cliffs. Does not appear to have spread far inland.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).—On December 16 four were seen flying along the boulder bank, but after that none was seen or heard by day, though a careful watch was kept. Odd birds were twice flushed on the flat after dark.

White-backed magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).—Earlier in the spring Mr. Parkin found the remains of one. It had evidently reached the island in a weakened condition and had succumbed to hawk or cat.

[Readers should refer to an article by Mr. E. G. Turbott on the Birds of Little Barrier Island (N.Z. Bird Notes, Vol. 2, p. 93) for list of literature relating to the island. The correct scale of the map of the island published with Mr. Turbott's article is $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to an inch.]

BIRD LIFE IN DART AND ROUTEBURN VALLEYS.

By Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club.

From January 13 to 22, 1947, a party of about 20 members of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club spent nine days at the Routeburn Lodge, near the junction of the Routeburn and the Dart rivers, and from their observations the following report has been prepared. There are more or less open river flats along the course of the Dart, occasional open grassy glades in the Routeburn Valley and beech forest in the area under review.

It is about ten miles from Kinloch, at the head of Lake Wakatipu, to the Routeburn Lodge, and observation of the first seven miles of the Dart River flats was made only from a bus going and coming, so consequently was very limited. For several miles in the vicinity of the Lodge one of the streams of the Dart ran swiftly and deeply against the southern bank, preventing any visit being made to the shingle beds

and grassy islands between the various streams of the Dart, the bed of which in places is a mile or more in width. It was on the comparatively open pasture land on the south bank of the Dart, the cultivated land near the Routeburn Station homestead, and on the open grassy glades in the lower Routeburn Valley that most of the introduced birds were seen.

INTRODUCED BIRDS.

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*): In numbers chiefly about the homestead area; on one occasion a flock of about 100 starlings was seen.

Hedge sparrow (*Prunella modularis*): In small numbers. Occasional songs recorded.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and thrush (*T. ericetorum*): Fairly common, the latter appearing to be the more numerous.

Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret*): Very common, song flights being noted repeatedly daily on the flat near the Lodge.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) and greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*): Heard and seen occasionally.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*): Heard singing on the mata-gourie-studded pasture land between the Lodge and the homestead and in open glades in the lower Routeburn Valley, two or three being noted during walks in these areas.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*): Judging by the songs, very common, and heard and seen daily. On January 14 a nest containing four eggs was found in a young *Pinus insignis* about four feet from the ground. The chaffinch appeared to have penetrated much further up the Routeburn Valley than the other finches.

Little owl (*Athene noctua*): Heard calling at night in the vicinity of the Lodge, the native morepork being heard at the same time in much the same locality.

NATIVE BIRDS ON THE RIVER FLATS.

At Kinloch, while waiting for the bus to take us to the Lodge, we were entertained by a flock of about 30 black billed gulls (*Larus bulleri*) and the following day we saw a flock of about 40 following a harrow which was drawn by a tractor. That evening at sunset a flock of about 200 or 300 small gulls circled high over the junction of the Routeburn and Dart, and if they were all black-billed their numbers in this area must be considerable.

A bird often seen with the black-billed gull was the black-fronted tern (*Chlidonias albigularis*) and there were ten among the flock of gulls following the harrow. Some of them were carrying grubs and worms towards the riverbed to an area which it was impossible to investigate. Along the stretch of the Routeburn near the Lodge, three to six were seen daily patrolling the river.

Four pairs of pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus finschi*) were seen, the first pair from the bus on our way to the Lodge, and another pair was with the gulls and terns in the field where the tractor was working. Black oystercatchers (see note, page 147) were also seen, two small flocks united giving a count of 28.

Two pairs of banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*) were recorded, and possibly there were others nesting on the inaccessible shingle flats between the streams of the Dart.

Grey ducks (*Anas poicilorhyncha*) were seen in small numbers, four young being recorded with their parents at Kinloch.

Paradise ducks (*Tadorna variegata*) were seen daily, usually in pairs. In three different localities females feigned injury when approached. Four small young ones were seen with their parents on the Dart River, and also a flight of seven full grown young. On January 22, from the Lodge to Kinloch, over 12 were counted, chiefly in pairs, male and female. Two blue ducks (*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus*) were seen at Sylvan Lake.

Only a few black-backed gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) were seen, and at a lagoon near Kinloch three or four pied stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) and one pukeko (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) were seen.

A solitary black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) flew up and down the Routeburn, and a dead and headless one lay beside Sylvan Lake. A harrier (*Circus approximans*) circled daily over the flat at the Lodge, and between the Lodge and Kinloch three were counted on the day of our departure. These, with three pipits (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*) complete the record of the native birds of the more open spaces.

FOREST BIRDS.

No walk was taken through the beech forest without seeing at least a few rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*). The largest number seen at any one time was eight. On one side of the road two parents were feeding three young, and on the other side another pair was feeding one young. One day when the party was sitting in the forest beside the Routeburn a pair of rifleman dropped from the beeches to the ground fighting. On the way to Lake Harris a few of the larger bush wrens (*Xenicus longipes*) were noted, and above the bush line one or two rock wrens (*X. gilviventris*).

Only a few songs of the grey warbler (*Pseudogerygone igata*) were heard, but if time were taken to sit down and call, always one or two pairs appeared. Silver-eyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) were seen in small numbers only.

The yellow-breasted tit (*Petroica macrocephala*) was a common bird, numbers being seen daily and songs repeatedly heard, but the birds recorded were chiefly males. Possibly not more than half a dozen females were noted during the nine days. Around the Lodge two or three males were seen daily, singing and chasing, but a female was seen only once or twice.

Yellowheads (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) were frequently seen in small numbers of twos or threes to small flocks up to about 12, but one flock of about 20 appeared in response to calls. Of these many were young birds still being fed by their parents. One day a young bird able to make a very short flight fluttered across our track. Adults were seen to use their feet in a manner similar to the use of a hand—to put a caterpillar in the bill, to change the position of a caterpillar held in the bill, and to remove bark from a tree when searching for food. Usually parrakeets were noted where a flock of yellowheads was present.

The fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) was seen only in small numbers, probably not more than about a dozen altogether during the nine days. Of these, three were black, two of them being in company with a pied, and the third also being with a pied.

Several robins (*Miro australis*) were seen daily, often in pairs, two pairs being recorded near the Lodge on the evening of our arrival, and a pair was frequently at the back door for crumbs. On one occasion two adults were watched feeding a young one. When one parent lay down to sun bathe, spreading its wings and tail and turning from side to side, the young one lay down a few inches from and facing its parent and imitated its movements. The robins were very trusting, and on more than one occasion alighted on members of the party. One tried to pull a red thread out of a tweed skirt. During the day short trills of song were heard, but in the early morning a long trilling song.

The calls of the shining cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) were heard at Sylvan Lake on January 19 and in the Routeburn Valley on January 21. The long-tailed cuckoo (*Eudynamis taitensis*) was heard much more often. On January 16 it was heard repeatedly near the Routeburn Huts, also during the night, and on the morning of January 17 in the forest above the huts where one was seen. One was also seen the previous day in the lower Routeburn.

Bellbirds (*Anthornis melanura*) were fairly common. Several songs differed from those heard about Dunedin, but one song heard at Pura-kanui (12 miles N.E. from Dunedin) but not at Dunedin, was heard at the Routeburn. Tuis (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) were seen in small numbers of about three to five in a day. One came to the back door for egg shells. One or two wood pigeons (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) were noted daily. Parrakeets were seen in flight in numbers up to five, but it was impossible to estimate the numbers among the beech trees. Usually the birds were too high for identification, but in the three or four different localities where the birds were low in the trees, all noted were yellow-fronted (*Cyanoramphus auriceps*). Where seen in numbers, yellowheads were also present. At twilight the calls of kakas (*Nestor meridionalis*) were once heard from the forest but only one or two were seen in the Routeburn Valley. Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) calls were heard at dusk near the Lodge. One morning parrakeets were making a great chattering in some beech trees, and presently out flew an owl chased by some small birds. Only a glimpse was caught of the owl, but it appeared to be the darker native bird. The calls of keas (*Nestor notabilis*) were heard from the Harris Saddle, but mist prevented the birds from being seen.

[The report of the black oystercatcher being seen in this inland locality was referred to Mrs. I. Tily, president of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club, for confirmation. Miss C. White, a club member, when shown illustrations of pied and black oystercatchers, instantly put her finger on the black one as the bird she had seen. She said that when standing the bird showed no white, but in flight a V-shaped white area was seen on the undersurface. Miss White says she has noted birds with similar markings at Waitati. If the bird showed white markings it could hardly be *unicolor*. Is it *reischekii*? If it is, this record is a considerable extension southward of its known range. Mrs. P. L. Moore, another club member, also reports birds which she took to be "hybrids."—Ed.]



Photo. H. S. Tily.

Routeburn River in foreground, where black-fronted terns patrolled daily. Routeburn Lodge in middle distance, behind which is Routeburn Valley, beech clad on lower slopes, where native forest bird life was most abundant.



Photo. H. S. Tily.

Beech and matagouri-studded flat on which the Routeburn Lodge is situated near the junction of the Routeburn with the Dart. Mt. Earnslaw (left) and Mt. Alfred (right) in background. It was here when the shadows had fallen on the flats that hundreds of small gulls circled high above in the light of the setting sun, and where black-fronted terns were seen daily.

BIRDS IN DART AND ROUTEBURN VALLEYS.