

# New Zealand Bird Notes

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MATING OF PIED STILT.—On October 15th, 1946, in the Oreti River bed, about a mile north of Winton, I witnessed the mating of a pair of pied stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*). It was the middle of a dull, cold, windy afternoon. On a sandy stretch three of these birds had been feeding restlessly for some time. Of these, two, apparently males, were constantly quarrelling until a pair flew to some distance and settled. After a short time the female stood quite still, stiff-legged, head to the wind, tail, head and beak all on a level and with the head tucked back hard into the "shoulders." Thus she presented a firm platform that reminded me, somehow, of an aircraft carrier. For a while the male took no notice continuing to feed here and there. When well to leeward he flew into the air, ten feet high, whence he gradually lowered himself with unerring accuracy in spite of the high wind. Alighting gently with legs at full stretch, he stood poised with either foot on the firm, folded wing surfaces. Gradually, and almost gingerly, he folded up his long legs till both bodies met. Even then he needed great skill in the art of balancing. When the action was completed she straightened up suddenly while he as suddenly slid off backwards but landed squarely on his feet. For a moment they seemed to gaze at each other as in astonishment before running off in opposite directions to feed as though they had never met before. By contrast to the above deliberate process, I saw the flash-like action of the male hedge-sparrow (*Prunella modularis*) where the contact is so quick that the eye can hardly detect just how it happens.—W. M. Burrows, Gore.

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Dr. W. R. B. Oliver has taken up his duties as Director of the Canterbury Museum.