

ance about the legs. When feeding, the spoonbill moves its head and bill from side to side with a scythe-like motion, as it walks slowly forward in shallow water.

HABITS OF SHINING CUCKOO.

By ROSS H. MICHIE, Kaitaia.

I heard the first shining cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) on the morning of September 25, 1947 at about 10.30, flying over, making a flight call, a drawn-out "wheeo," at intervals. It was not until October 2 (a week later) that I heard the next. From that day on they have been seen and heard almost daily.

The long-tailed cuckoo (*Eudynamis taitensis*) is seldom seen or heard about here, and I think this applies to North Auckland generally. Although always on the watch for it, I have only seen one bird here in 26 years, and heard it on four or five occasions, the last being in a piece of bush in the vicinity of Pandora (Spirits Bay) in October, 1946. The comparative absence of this bird about here is possibly because there are no whiteheads (*Mohoua albicilla*) in the North, this being the bird on which the long-tailed cuckoo usually shoulders the responsibility of bringing up its family.

When I was a boy I found two nests of the grey warbler (*Pseudogerygone igata*) each containing a shining cuckoo's egg, and two nests containing a cuckoo chick in each.

About nine years ago at about 8 o'clock on a summer morning I was carrying my cream out to the road when I noticed a shining cuckoo sitting on the fence apparently trying to swallow something too large for it. I stopped immediately and watched. It sat there for about a minute jerking its head back, with its beak pointing almost straight up. It then deliberately dropped something and flew away. On investigating I found it was a fresh egg of a chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) that it had sucked. A second experience occurred about two years later. Within a chain of our house is a small native bush reserve fringed with a little tea-tree, about an acre and a half in all. One morning I noticed a shining cuckoo sitting on a small teatree about three feet from the ground, going through the same performance as already described. After a minute or so it dropped the shell and flew away. I found that it had sucked a grey warbler's egg, and within a few inches of this eggshell was another which had apparently been sucked the day before or prior to that. The inside of the shell was perfectly dry. The cuckoo had evidently found the same twig a convenient place on each occasion. I made a thorough search for the warbler's nest without success. I have no recollection of anyone having seen a shining cuckoo sucking eggs.

Do cuckoos return to the same locality each year? A few years ago a cuckoo that frequented our bush reserve for a few months had a variation in its song. It would give about half a dozen of its "cooing" notes in the usual way, then step up an octave, starting off with the "coooo" on the higher note of the previous "coooo" and carrying on till breaking into the "wheeo, wheeo" of the latter part of its song. This song was repeated over a period of two or three months. The following season we heard the same kind of song for a similar period and presumed it would be the same bird. We have not heard it since.