

## BIRD LIFE NEAR LAKE HAUROKO, SOUTHLAND.

By Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club.

On October 25 and 26, 1947, three members of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club were in a small party that visited Lake Hauroko, Southland. Mrs. P. L. Moore, a member both of the O.S.N.Z. and the D.N.F.C., kept bird records which she passed on to the bird recorder of the D.N.F.C. and from which this report has been compiled.

From the end of the road in the Lillburn Valley there is a nine miles' walk to the lake. The first five miles of the track passes through more or less open country with scattered patches of scrub, but the last four miles is through beech forest. Most of the bird life was noted when the party stopped for rests or to "boil the billy."

In the Lillburn Valley and during the nine-mile walk to Lake Hauroko, twenty harriers (*Circus approximans*) were counted. At a stream which is crossed at the entrance to the forest, two kingfishers (*Halcyon sanctus*) were noted.

Birds seen in the forest were: Five yellow-breasted tits (*Petroica m. macrocephala*), one black fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*), three robins (*Miro australis*), one pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), and at the lake two keas (*Nestor notabilis*). Birds heard but not seen were the rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*), grey warbler (*Pseudogerygone igata*), bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) and kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*).

Three blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) were the only introduced birds recorded during the walk.

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## NOTES ON BLACK-BACKED GULL.

By E. W. Hursthouse, Mahina Bay.

As the common and majestic black-backed gull (*Larus dominicanus*) does not appear to have received much attention the following notes may be of interest and induce others to make a study of this bird. My notes, based on observations extending over several years, are confined almost entirely to two pair—permanent residents of about 100 yards of sandy and rocky beach opposite my home in Mahina Bay. This bay is on the eastern side of Port Nicholson, Wellington. Other birds are about when fishermen are netting or when food is thrown out, otherwise only these two pairs remain.

The cock birds of these two pairs, in a peculiar and interesting action (a similar action has been noted on other beaches) stand opposite each other at a distance of 12 to 18 inches, pick up a pebble or piece of seaweed, cast it down, approach and retire in the manner of a challenge. Of the many times I have seen this, not once has the challenge been taken up. When first noted it was during the courting period and I surmised that it was in some way connected with courtship, but as this action occurs at any time of the year it has the appearance of some form of game. It is not confined to the shore as I have seen it happening well out in the water where the birds dip their bills in the water.

The love-making, as with many other birds, is preceded by much "billing" and "cooing" but in actual coition it may be different for in this case, after crossing bills several times, the hen stands firmly and the cock bird mounts her. In one case a bird remained there for the best part of one minute.

The nearest breeding colony in this district, as far as I am aware, is that in Fraser Bay, near Baring Lighthouse, some ten miles walk from here, or a three-mile walk after a motor trip of some 20 miles down the Wainui Road. I visited this locality many years ago in February and saw a number of young birds.

When the young birds are brought here I have been astonished at the total indifference of the parent bird to feeding them, for on nearly every