

occasion when appealed to by the young bird for food the adult quietly walked away. Only on two occasions have I noted a bird giving any food and that I am certain was under protest. In trying to find food, the young bird is forced to experiment, for it will pick up anything that looks likely and in most cases discards it. At what age the young birds begin to recognise food I am unable to say.

As far as I can gather it is not until the second year that they attempt to learn the trick of gathering a shellfish and dropping it on the rocks, as on one occasion only have I seen a young bird pick up a small mussel, fly high, drop it in the water and fly down immediately to find nothing and rest on the water. I wonder what its thoughts were. It would seem that the young are not taught by the parents.

These birds are a constant source of interest and to see a good fight is a thrill. One fight I recall nearly resulted in the death of a bird. Two were fighting in the water near the rocks when one got the better of the other and kept it under water by diving at it, until, thinking this not very sporting I disturbed them. The half-drowned bird took some time to recover before flying away.

Occasionally in the late summer evening a number of birds may be seen high up flying in a large circle, the number gradually being reduced as each bird leaves for its night quarters.

SEA-BIRDS AT BANKS PENINSULA.

By Charles Lindsay, Wellington.

While on a yachting cruise to Akaroa from Lyttelton during late December, 1947, and early January, 1948, opportunity offered to observe marine birds and the following notes are the result:—

White-flipped Penguin (*Eudyptula albosignata*).—Only four penguins, almost certainly this species, were observed, two in Akaroa and two off the south coast of the peninsula near Pompey's Pillar. On one warm, dark night in Akaroa quite a number were heard calling to each other.

Giant Petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*).—This bird was scarce, two being recorded on the south side of the peninsula on January 9, and one off the north coast on the 10th.

Flesh-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*).—Three birds believed to be this species were seen off Sleepy Bay on January 9. They were observed in flight from a short distance, when the flesh-coloured webs and light-coloured mandible were most noticeable. Banks Peninsula is south of the normal range of this bird, but specimens have been recorded as far south as Kaikoura.

Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*).—Nine mutton birds were noted on January 9 between Akaroa Head and East Head.

Fluttering Shearwater (*Puffinus gavia*).—About 20 individuals were counted on January 9 between Akaroa Head and East Head.

White-capped Mollmawk (*Thalassarche cauta*).—Eight mollmawks of this species were recorded on January 9 on the south coast and one off Okain's Bay on the northern side, on January 10.

Spotted Shag (*Stictocorbo punctatus*).—This was the commonest bird observed round the peninsula, but it is off the northern side where it is present in large numbers. On December 26 a large number was observed in close formation on the water. In extent this group of birds measured about 400 yards long by 50 to 60 yards wide: the number of birds must have been 3,000. At the time weather conditions were severe, with a north-west gale and rough seas. The birds appeared to be just resting, as none was noticed to dive in search of fish. On January 10, in fine weather, large numbers of this shag were observed in several groups from Okain's Bay to Lyttelton Heads; many were busy catching fish. A rough census estimated that 4000 to 5000 birds were present. On the south side of the peninsula only small numbers were noted, with several small breeding colonies near Pompey's Pillar. In Akaroa

Harbour a small nesting colony of five or six nests was observed at the end of Onawe Peninsula. The nests were about ten feet above the water. This is unusual, as a more inaccessible site normally is preferred.

Gannet (*Moris serrator*).—Although of infrequent occurrence south of Cook Strait, a lone individual was seen in flight off Port Levy on January 10.

White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*).—Except at the Sail Rocks, near Little Akaloa, where there was a nesting colony of about 80 birds, few specimens were seen, only four being noted on Akaroa Harbour.

Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*).—This gull was seen in small numbers only round the coast of Banks Peninsula. In Akaroa Harbour about 20 were counted.

Red-billed Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*).—About 30 were seen in Akaroa Harbour; present in small numbers round the coast between Akaroa and Lyttelton. A breeding colony of about 100 birds was observed at the entrance to Port Levy.

Black-billed Gull (*Larus bulleri*).—One individual was seen with a small flock of red-billed gulls in Lyttelton Harbour.

Reef Heron (*Demigretta sacra*).—One heron was seen in flight near Onawe Peninsula, Akaroa Harbour, on January 7.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*).—One white swan exists in Akaroa Harbour, this being the last of six or seven which formerly lived there in a semi-wild state. The existing bird is accustomed to being fed from small craft, as almost daily it visited yachts at anchor, and in most cases was successful in getting bread and other scraps of food.

A noticeable feature of the distribution of birds off the coasts of Banks Peninsula is the fact that, as far as my limited observations go, the petrels are concentrated on the southern side, while the spotted shag is present in large numbers on the northern side. The shags have their nesting sites on the cliffs, thus accounting for their presence off this northern shore; but in the case of the petrels it seems that the southern side facing the great southern ocean is preferred, as conditions there more closely resemble the open sea, which is the home of most petrels.

CROMWELL BIRD DIARY.

By J. Middleditch, Cromwell.

A pair of banded dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) appeared on the Cromwell Flats on 13/8/47 in a locality that had been used for nesting the previous year. Another bird seen on the same day, about a mile from the first, may have been one of the birds seen earlier.

A pair of pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus finschi*) seen on the morning of 14/8/47 were gone at midday.

18/8/47.—Two dotterels which appeared on 13/8/47 did not stay and have now disappeared.

1/9/47.—A native pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) has visited the willow trees on the river bank at Cromwell. It arrived early in August and is feeding on the young buds of the Chinese creepers (local name). I believe a pigeon (possibly the same one) visits this locality every spring.

7/9/47.—Saw several pairs of banded dotterels on the flats. These may be the birds reported earlier.

24/9/47.—Saw a pair of pied stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) beside an irrigation ditch; new arrivals.

4/10/47.—Banded dotterels seen again in the same place where I saw them on 18/8/47. These have just arrived as I have watched this area daily since the birds departed from there between 13/8/47 and 18/8/47.

4/10/47.—Saw a pair of pied oystercatchers on the Sugar Loaf. This is on a much higher level than I usually see them.