

On 24/6/47, I saw at sea from the island a flock of dark petrels, not visible to the eye, but plainly seen through a good telescope. They were all dark, no white under the wing, and feeding in a very loosely scattered flock, which stretched out of sight. They were certainly not flesh-footed shearwater, nor, if the absence of white under the wing could be taken as certain at such a distance, were they sooty shearwater. Neither of these species should have been present at the time. It seems that they most likely were grey-faced petrel working unusually close to land. Mr. P. C. Bull advises that the flock formation is characteristic. Also the species was nesting on the islands and the coast at the time.

Mr. St. Paul had a tantalising experience with a call which was exactly like that of a blue-wattled crow (*Calleas cinerea wilsoni*) but it was too distant to be sure and it was only heard twice. It came from away on the far side of Tirikakawa Valley, being heard from the old camp-site on the Summit Track. No tui call of this kind was heard during our stay. This call was the one known to us as the "organ and pipe." Mr. St. Paul is one of the best qualified men in New Zealand in regard to knowledge of this bird. As a boy he pelted them with clods as he went to school and except for his service in the 1914-18 war, he has lived among them ever since. Scarcely a week goes by without his seeing and hearing crows and he studies them closely. I may add that he is also a zealous guardian of the species in his district. I would, therefore, ask any future observers on Little Barrier Island who know the blue-wattled crow, to spend some time to find more definite evidence, even though the chances of success are probably poor. (c.f. Turbott, 1947.)

June 30 came all too soon and we sailed away on the "Gunner," sorry to be leaving this very heaven of birds, and sad, indeed, to leave those most wonderful friends, hosts and co-workers, Mr. and Mrs. Parkin of the island.

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## PIED STILT COLONY.

By Mrs. Olga Sansom, Invercargill.

On November 1, 1947, I visited a section of the Borstal Farm adjacent to the Oreti River, five miles from Invercargill, to see if the pied stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) was nesting there. The locality is a river mouth with a bank of shingle, an area of rush and stunted silver tussock merging into marshy flats with a covering of shore gentian, a native buttercup (in flower), samolus and cotula (in flower), rush and big red tussock.

I counted 20 birds; they circled above me, swooped and yelped complainingly. It took me twenty minutes to find the first nest as I was searching amongst the stunted silver tussock, and only by good luck got out on to the shingle to make a detour, and there it was. I found five nests. Each nest was in a hollow in the shingle with hardly any nesting material, on the shore side of a single tussock a foot to 18 inches away from it. There were four eggs in each nest; they were all warm. When I found that the birds were sitting and how much more of an intruder I was than I had first thought, I made some brief and hurried notes and left.

On November 10, I set out from Invercargill to again visit the nests but did not get there owing to the collapse of my bicycle! However, on November 17 the position was: No. 1 nest: Two nestlings (no sign of other 2 eggs); No. 2 nest, ditto. No. 3 nest, 1 nestling (1 egg); No. 4 nest, 4 eggs (warm); No. 5 nest, empty. The perfect colour camouflage of the nestling was interesting. It looked as like the shingle as did the eggs. I counted 16 birds in the air. There may have been other nests, but although I searched I did not see any more. These five were within a radius of twelve yards. During the last two years a few pied stilts at least have been resident here on this estuary during the whole year.