

NOTES.

BIRDS OBSERVED IN AVON-HEATHCOTE ESTUARY (near Sumner) during 1947-48. (See Classified Notes for scientific names).—Pied oystercatchers: Birds were present throughout the year, numbers ranging from 30 up to about 700; 1947, Sept. 6, about 300; Oct. 30, about 100; Nov. 11, 77; Dec. 9, about 500. 1948: Feb. 10, about 700. This number remained fairly constant until September, when the flock dwindled; Oct. 11, about 30; Oct. 18, about 150. Black oystercatchers: Seen with pied; 1947, Sept. 6, 1; Dec. 9, 2; 1948, Oct. 11, 1. Blue herons, one or two seen throughout the year. Crested grebe: One seen from Oct. 30 to Nov. 7, 1947. Spotted shags: Numerous, seen almost daily. Black shag: Seen occasionally. Kingfisher: Numerous around s. side of estuary and clay banks; in autumn and winter they go into gardens higher up the hills. Godwit: 1947, Dec. 9, about 350, fairly constant until Feb., 1948; Feb. 9, about 300, then disappeared. (April 26, three feeding with oystercatchers, information Mr. L. Bassett.). Sandpiper: 1947, Dec. 11, one bird seen with godwits. Canada geese: 1948, March 7, 8 birds. Black swans: 1948, Feb. 10, about 30 birds. Paradise Duck: 1948, May 21, pair seen in estuary (information Mr. L. Bassett). Black-backed gulls, black-billed gulls, red-billed gulls: Throughout the year, but adult birds seldom seen in nesting season. Pied stilt (near Heathcote Bridge): 1947, Sept. 15, pair, nesting later; 1948, Mar. 27, 15; Oct. 1, pair again. Pukeko: Live in swampy area at western end; up to six seen on same day.—G. Guy, Sumner.

ARRIVAL OF SHINING CUCKOO.—During the several years I was in the Raglan district, and again at Whangarei, people in the Waitakere district regularly reported hearing the call of the shining cuckoo at least ten days before anyone did in the districts I have mentioned. I do not think we were less observant than the people near the Waitakere ranges. I came, therefore, to the conclusion that the birds annually make their landfall in the region of Manukau, and then spread north and south. In the seven years I have lived here, I have not heard the bird earlier than Oct. 13, but at noon on Sept. 17, our cat brought a half-eaten one to the door. So perhaps the birds do not begin their call as soon as they arrive.—H. Atkins, Cambridge.

HIGH-FLYING BITTERN.—Recently I came suddenly on a bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) which, to my surprise, spiralled up till it had reached a height estimated at 1000 feet. Despite a strong wind it kept a vertical axis to the spiral. At the top of its climb it appeared to glide into the wind in a straight line, but it was too high to see details of wing movements though nearly overhead. I have never seen a bittern more than a few feet off the ground and wonder whether this particular bird's behaviour was unusual.—John Hodgkin, Moa Flat.

BIRDS AT MOA FLAT, HERIOT, OTAGO.—My farm is between 900 and 1400 feet high. It is open, ridgy country, with English grasses and cultivation on the ridges; tussock, matagouri, danthonia Raouli and grasses in the gullies. Trees: Plantations near homestead and shelter belts, chiefly *Pinus spp.* Rainfall, 30in. per annum. Temperatures usually cool all the year. Soil: Fairly heavy. Observations made from 1934 to 1947. Common during some or all of the year (for scientific names see those in classified notes):—Starling, sparrow, hedge sparrow, thrush, blackbird, chaffinch, goldfinch, greenfinch, redpoll, yellowhammer, skylark, pipit, grey warbler, white-eye, black-backed gull, harrier, little owl, pukeko (in neighbouring swamp). Seen occasionally (in order of frequency):—Grey duck, rock pigeon, oystercatcher, stilt, black shag, black-fronted tern, paradise duck, banded dotterel (not seen for some years), black-billed gull (seen in last 4 years only, spreading north gradually), fantail (not seen for some years), yellow-breasted tit (a pair once seen in a neighbouring plantation), bush hawk (four or five times in 13 years), bittern (one, more common in swamp), bellbird (once), long-tailed cuckoo (once).—John Hodgkin.