

BITTERN v. HARRIER.—Last January I saw the end of a fight between a bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) and a harrier (*Circus approximans*). On approaching a lake in the sandhills beyond Muriwai, I heard a rustling in the rushes, and on climbing a cabbage tree saw a hawk flapping in the water with a bittern between the hawk and the bittern's nest. When the bittern saw me it disappeared, but the hawk stayed, evidently too wounded and wet to fly. I swam out to the nest and found four young bitterns. They were so nervous when they saw me that they vomited up frogs and tadpoles. I tried to handle the chicks, which pecked me in self-defence. I then swam ashore and destroyed the hawk. —G. Wightman, Waimauku.

BIRDS IN FIELD, MANAPOURI-MOSSBURN ROAD.—On November 30, 1947, between the Mararoa River and Mossburn, in a grassy field, boggy looking and sloping gently about 200 yards from the road to Gorge Stream, a large number of birds was seen. The car was stopped while an attempt to take a count was made. The count resulted in the following:—South Island oystercatchers (*Haematopus finschi*), at least 20; paradise ducks (*Tadorna variegata*), over 100, of which about 30 were adult females; black-backed gull (*Larus dominicanus*), one; black-billed gull (*Larus bulleri*), 80 to 90; pied stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*), three or four; pukeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), three. An exact count was impossible as more birds were flying in as the count was being made, and movements of birds upset calculations. A herd of cattle was present in the field.—Mrs. I. Tily, Dunedin.

BIRD COMRADESHIP.—The following incident was observed recently at Kaingaroa Forest, exemplifying the assistance rendered by birds to others of their kind in time of distress. A small colony of starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) frequenting the forest settlement at which I am stationed, is in the habit of roosting in a shelter belt surrounding my residence and one late afternoon the incessant shrill cries and commotion of the birds led me to investigate the cause. One of the birds, suspended by a claw which had become wedged in a pine cone, some 20 feet from the ground, was frantically trying to free itself, while another starling, just as greatly distressed, would alight on the captive at intervals of a few seconds and endeavour to dislodge it, either by added weight or additional wing-action. Just as I was on the point of climbing the tree to lend a helping hand, the rescuing bird, spurred on perhaps to a final desperate effort, swooped down, alighted on the captive and with a combined mad fluttering, accomplished that which it had set out to achieve. It is interesting to note that I was observed throughout the incident by both birds but my presence did not in any way deter the rescuer from carrying out its determined and successful effort.—M. F. Weeks.

LITTLE OWL RAIDING STARLING'S NEST.—In late October, 1947, for hygienic reasons, 20 young starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were removed from four nests (6, 4, 5, 5) in a clipped macrocarpa close to the house. The parent birds immediately began nesting again. On 26/11/47 a little owl (*Athene noctua*) raided these nests. From 10 till 11 a.m., in dull, calm, mild weather, the owl was seen to make several visits to the nests, emerging with very young birds in its beak. Between the raids it perched on the clothes-line prop, the barn roof and a flax-flower stalk, all within 8 to 10 yards of the nests. The starlings kept up noisy squawks and made swoops at the intruder, which ignored the adult birds.—Miss S. I. Anderson, Herbert.

STARLINGS WORKING FIELD.—Early in September I noticed a large flock of starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) estimated to exceed 5000, feeding on the southern end of the airfield at the Hood Aerodrome, Masterton. They systematically worked across the field reaching the north corner by October 1. On October 4 they were not to be seen. A very small flock was noted on October 6, apparently cleaning up a small corner on the extreme northern end, since when no birds have been seen.—G. Selby, Masterton.