

Eight pairs were present at Mangawai Heads, 24/11/40. One pair had two youngsters on the wing. Of the others, only one pair had a nest and that contained one egg. The others had probably lost their nests as three washed-out eggs were found in different places.

## CASPIAN TERN COLONY.

By Crawford S. Pennycook, Timaru.

Notes on the breeding of the Caspian tern (*Hydroprogna caspia*) at Washdyke Lagoon, Canterbury, are:—

Sept. 9, 1947.—About 20 Caspian terns were noticed standing on the western or lagoon slope of the shingle bank between the sea and the lagoon. On investigation I found many hollows in the sand, lined with small stones or small sticks, and a few feathers. Only one egg was found, about the size of a large hen egg, and fawn coloured, with brown spots and grey splotches.

Sept. 13.—Counted 25 birds and 9 eggs. Each nest containing eggs, had either three or two eggs.

Sept. 21.—Many more birds in the colony; 45 eggs, most nests now containing three eggs (a few with two).

Sept. 27.—40 Caspian terns and 64 eggs counted.

Oct. 4.—Found first chick in a nest with 1 egg. Counted 55 birds, 34 nests and 80 eggs. Bad weather prevented further observations till mid-November.

Nov. 15.—Noticed several eggs and one newly-hatched chick, while 20 to 30 half-grown chicks ran into the sea at my approach.

A new colony of Caspian terns was found on the shingle bank in August, 1948.

Aug. 31, 1948.—Counted 20 birds, but no eggs as yet, although there were several nests under construction.

Sept. 6.—Signs of high seas having swept over nests mentioned in August. Only two nests remain, both with three eggs. Also found two loose eggs, supposed to be washed out of nests by high seas. Other birds have gone further down the spit and started another colony. (Colony 2.) Counted 20 birds in this colony and six nests containing one and two eggs. Also about seven nests under construction.

Sept. 8.—Colony 1: No sign of colony or nests. Indications of high seas having covered nesting site. Colony not being resumed. Colony No. 2: No sign of original nests, these having been washed away in high seas, but new colony started on same site, four nests with one egg. Also several nests with no eggs; 20 birds counted and 50 white-fronted terns (*Sterna striata*) besides Caspian terns.

Sept. 10.—The site of the original colony still deserted but the second sitting at the second colony more successful, there being about 45 Caspian terns and 16 nests, eight with eggs and eight without. Only 10 white-fronted terns seen.

Sept. 11.—The number of Caspian terns reduced to 35 but 50 odd white-fronted terns were at rest on the shingle in the immediate neighbourhood.

Sept. 13.—Now only 25 Caspian terns and seven nests with eggs.

Sept. 15.—Fifteen Caspian terns and 7 nests, but several eggs found with the shell broken, a hole about one inch across having been made in one side of each egg.

Sept. 17.—Still 15 Caspian terns and seven nests.

Sept. 19.—Only four nests left, with two eggs in each. No sign of any broken shell about the nests.

Sept. 21.—All nests and eggs washed away by high seas. Saw one Caspian tern hovering over the site of the colony.

Sept. 23.—No sign of Caspian terns anywhere on beach or lagoon. Colony not resumed during the following fortnight's observations.