

formes and at least two waders (*Charadriiformes*) yet to be identified; and various other odd species also.

We see that perhaps the most interesting inclusions in the above list are the extinct eagle, crow, coot and swan and also the kakapo and yellow-eyed penguin.

BIRD LIFE ON AN ESTUARY.

By (Mrs.) N. F. Stidolph, Masterton.

To the bird lover living inland the shore—and particularly the river-mouth—abounds with interest. An Easter visit to the Ohau River mouth was none the less exciting for its lack of migrants. Numbers of dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) were feeding on the mudflats in more or less nondescript plumage, several stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) paddled up and down in the shallow water and many more slept on the sunny strip of sand on the edge of the spit. There also five oystercatchers (*Haematopus reischeki*) careered up and down the spit making absurd noises and showing off. Two of them bathed near to where I was sitting but a piping call from the rest of the party was too exciting for them and they left the water in a hurry.

Across the spit, near the ocean, black-backed gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) in plenty soared high in the air and dived with harsh cries after their falling shells. Gannets (*Morus serrator*) skimmed the water in a graceful line and odd shags (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), black and grotesque, flew between the shore and the hills. In the water close by three small gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae*) floated with the current and fed continuously on the surface.

Every few minutes dotterels arrived to join those already sprinting about on the mudflat. They were very aggressive. Two, which were feeding round the edge of the water nearest me were particularly so. They fed with their eyes on each other and kept away from the rest of the flock and never more than a few feet from where they were when I arrived and I was there nearly two hours. These two, intent on each other and their food, had some difficulty in pulling out of the mud what appeared to be a worm. It was long and pink and very tempting to a kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) which suddenly flashed into their midst—so blue against the brown mud—snatched the worm and swallowed it. He hopped about on the mud with his funny short legs but the dotterels joined forces and attacked him. The whole flock joined in and he had some difficulty in beating his way through them. They drove him quite a distance upstream and finally left him on a log very agitated, flicking his tail. They all returned to the mudflat and went about their feeding as usual but with a peculiar little peeping such as a number of chickens make when disturbed.

The kingfisher hopped about the bank catching what appeared to be small crabs, but it was rather far away for me to be sure. My attention was drawn from him by the two dotterels he had robbed. They flew back to their little bit of mud and water, but in doing so I think they collided, for they attacked each other viciously and fell into the water—out of which one managed to fly while the other appeared to be unable to take off and had to swim. When I looked back the kingfisher had gone.

My attention was now drawn to the calling of silver-eyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) in the lupins on the sandhills and I decided to leave the mud for a few minutes to investigate. Before I could get there, however, I saw what to me was a novel sight—silver-eyes rising from the scrub, circling round in the air with more and more joining in, rising higher and higher still in circles until I could hear them but no longer see them. They didn't come down again at that place. When I had to leave the beach the dotterels were still running ceaselessly on the ever widening stretch of mud.

(The date of these observations was April 5, 1947.)