

HUDSONIAN GODWIT IN MANUKAU.

By R. B. Sibson, Auckland.

Records of the Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa limosa haemastica*) in New Zealand are slowly accumulating, the South Island so far claiming five and the North Island four. I can now add a tenth occurrence, so that the inter-island score stands at five-all.

On 10/4/49 a mixed pack of waders, mainly stilts and bar-tailed godwits with a few knots, had gathered in a quiet bay of Manukau Harbour near Puketutu causeway. As I examined them with a telescope I noticed on the edge of the pack a small well-coloured godwit with a whitish superciliary stripe, unusually clear-cut, and a very pink base to its bill. The angle at which the bird was standing prevented my seeing its tail; and as I was trying to manoeuvre into a better position the flock took wing. I missed the bird as it rose nor could I find it as the flock flew off. As the distinctive pattern of a Hudsonian godwit can only be seen in flight, I was unable to confirm my strong suspicion that this was indeed a black-tailed godwit of the American race.

Early on the morning of 25/4/49 I was able to settle the matter beyond doubt. Visiting the same locality again near full tide, I quickly had under observation a flock of about 200 pale bar-tailed godwits, all bearing the stamp of immaturity. With them a single godwit in breeding dress was most conspicuous. I again noted the white superciliary stripe. Dark bars crossed the rich red colouring of the chest and belly; but towards the vent the red faded and a grey area may have indicated that full breeding plumage had not yet been assumed. When a Hudsonian godwit is on the ground the black tail is not always easily seen. To confirm the identification, I had therefore, to put the flock up. They flew round most conveniently and realigned on the same patch of sand. In a small flock such as this the sharply-contrasting tail pattern of the Hudsonian godwit was easily picked out. On the previous occasion in a much larger flock the stilts, with their black and white plumage had distracted the eye.

There is no doubt, I think, that this bird was a Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa l. haemastica*) and not the eastern black-tailed godwit (*Limosa l. melanuroides*), which, according to all the authorities, has long legs which in flight project well behind the tail. So far the eastern black-tailed godwit has not been recorded from New Zealand; but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it should occur here; nor should it be assumed that any black-tailed godwits seen in New Zealand will be of the comparatively short-legged American race.

This is the third Hudsonian godwit that I have been able to watch at close quarters in New Zealand, both in flight and on the ground. The important diagnostic characters in both summer and winter plumage are: Black tail, white rump, whitish alar bar and rather small size. The superciliary stripe is not so conspicuous in winter plumage and some bar-tailed godwits show a suspicion of one. A Hudsonian godwit was recorded from the same locality in the winter of 1946 (N.Z. Bird Notes, Vol. 2, p. 35); and as this last bird, although in breeding plumage, had lingered some time after the main northward movement of adult bar-tails, it was eagerly but fruitlessly looked for during the ensuing winter.

ROSELLA EATING GOOSEBERRIES.—I grow eight varieties of gooseberries and the rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*) usually ignore all but one particular variety. This is called Whitesmith and the birds can clean up a bush in a very short time. Fortunately the variety they prefer is not one of the best. I have seen them try another variety, but last season, 1948-49, they took only the Whitesmiths.—W. H. Davidson, D.N.F.C.