

## FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF RED-BILLED GULLS

On 8/2/62, a small party of Red-billed Gulls (*L. scopulinus*) was observed to feed in an unusual manner on Awapuni Lagoon, Gisborne. The tide was low, and at this stage there is a considerable expanse of water from one to one and a half inches deep, which contains numbers of small sprats and flounders. My attention was drawn to three gulls flying in line ahead just above the surface of the water, with a fairly rapid wing-beat, the wing tips not quite breaking the surface, but causing a ruffling upon it. The feet were trailing in the water with the webs partly extended, and the neck was stretched forward, with a definite upward kink in it, so that the lower mandible was parallel with the surface, and about a quarter of an inch above it. Two birds held the beak open, and the other closed, throughout a perfectly straight flight of about thirty yards. Thereafter a succession of single birds went through the same evolution on approximately the same course, and it was noted that during most of the flights a sprat, and in one instance a tiny flounder, leapt from the water right under the tip of the bird's bill, to be caught unerringly. It would appear that the beating wing-tips and trailing feet acted as a kind of net to drive a fish forward until it sought to escape by leaping; also that the trailing feet acted as a brake to reduce the bird's speed to a noticeable degree.

A. BLACKBURN

A NOTE ON THE DIVING OF THE  
TWO NEW ZEALAND GREBES

When I was watching Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus australis*) at Lake Fergus in October, 1960, two dives were timed at 15 and 25 seconds. In May, 1961, at Lake Te Anau, a single bird was watched on two successive days swimming in front of the hotel, between 20 and 100 yards offshore. Timing of twelve dives varied from 45 to 62 seconds, average 52.6 seconds. These times are considerably longer than those given for the northern subspecies in the Handbook of British Birds. When diving, the head and neck first curved downwards, the back raised, and the bird went under with a push of its feet; on emerging it frequently, but not invariably, shook its head. On several occasions after a dive it raised its body vertically out of the water, and shook itself with some flapping of the wings.

Dabchicks (*P. rufopectus*) were studied in the Rotorua district during October, 1960. Six dives were timed at 37, 25, 50, 28, 33 and 25 seconds. Birds were seen bathing with much splashing and wing flapping, and after a bath they sometimes raised the body vertically out of the water and dried off with vigorous movement of the wings. Chasing was observed, the pursuing bird with its back humped and neck downcurved, so that the head was pushed forward and at a much lower level than the back. There were two very tame birds at Lake Rototiti. Both dived near the shore; one emerged with some weed pulled from the lake floor and then dived again to swim under a boathouse, carrying the weed in its bill. These birds communicated by a series of low pitched "tuk tuk tuk" notes.

— A. T. EDGAR