

some others were in different situations. One nest (Waipapakauri) was attached to the wood and malthoid above a steel girder under a bridge, and another (Kaingaroa) was attached to the smooth concrete wall of the bridge. The Houhora nest was completely different from any previously recorded in New Zealand. Two pipes, roughly four feet in diameter, and made up of various sections, go under the road. One of these sections had sunk slightly, leaving a gap of 70 mm. between the top of this particular section and the malthoid which covered the pipes. Here a small cup-shaped nest, only 30 mm. deep, was built, on top of the pipe and not attached to a vertical surface.

The stage of nesting varied. No nests examined contained young, though in some cases they had obviously left only recently. Almost all the nests had been used in the past few months. The Houhora nest contained one egg, as did the Waipapakauri nest. Evidently laying had just started again. On the Kaimaumau Road one nest contained two eggs and had been deserted, although Mr. R. H. Michie informs us adult birds were present only a fortnight before. A nest on a nearby bridge had been built directly below the gap between two boards in the bridge itself. Dust had come through and filled the nest, burying an egg. Another nest, on the Aurere River, was only just completed.

The eggs are of white ground colour, with a few very light grey undermarkings, and had reddish brown spots or blotches, mostly concentrated at the larger end. Measurements of three eggs were — 18 x 12.5, 17 x 12.5 and 17 x 12 mm.

If in a few years' time another check of all bridges on these roads could be made, some statistical evidence of the Welcome Swallow's status in the far north of New Zealand might be obtained.

P. D. G. SKEGG



FLOCKING OF WELCOME SWALLOWS NEAR KAIKOHE

Te Iringa

Roger Simpson reports that a flock of 32 appeared on 10/2/62 around the school; mounted to 37 on 20/2/62 and on 22/2/62 a flock of about 100 appeared for a brief time. About the week-end of 11th-12th March, the Welcome Swallows disappeared.

Northland College Farm

- 3/12/61 2 Swallows flying about wooden bridge. 2 young birds seen roosting under bridge.
- 5/12/61 3 Swallows flying over bridge, 2 adults, 1 young bird. 2 nests found under bridge. 1 nest (this season's) complete; the other (last season's?) partly destroyed.
- 10/2/62 No trace of 2 nests seen last December. 1 new nest built during school holidays — empty, but had been used. Throughout remainder of first school term adults and young birds seen constantly in vicinity of bridge, varying in numbers from 1 to 10; perhaps one pair of parents and two broods raised under bridge.
- Second term (last observation 19th June) only two adult birds seen in vicinity of bridge.

Kaikohe Sewage Pond

- 26/5/62 First swallows seen this year over sewage pond — 6 birds.
 9/6/62 As many — or more — as seen flocking over pond from May onwards last year, i.e. 20-30; possibly more, but very difficult to count.

Lake Omapere

- 24/3/62 A single swallow seen along southern shore. Other parts of lake not visited.

Ngawha

- 17/2/62 At least 40 swallows, probably 60+, seen over 'Kauri Log' Lake, feeding. (With H.R.McK.)
 31/3/62 Five feeding over small lake in front of Spa Hotel.
 1/7/62 Many seen on 'Kauri Log' Lake, but could not obtain count as they were resting amongst the sticks on the shore.

MALCOLM ROSS

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LITTLE TERNS IN THE FIRTH OF THAMES

In 1957 McKenzie and Sibson (*Notornis* VII, 174-182) collated their observations made over several years on certain puzzling terns which appeared every summer in small non-breeding flocks in the Firth of Thames. As most of these very small terns began to assume breeding dress in late summer at a time when adults of those species of tern which breed in New Zealand show worn feathering and are moulting into winter plumage — noticeable especially by the fading of the black cap — it was tentatively concluded that most of these small terns were *albifrons* and not *nereis*, and that they were coming to New Zealand as migrants from breeding grounds which were probably north of the equator.

In the intervening years small dark-billed, short-tailed terns have continued to appear in summer and to stay for some months on the southern coast of the Firth of Thames. The biggest counts made over the last five summers are: 9 on 30/12/57; 5 on 13/12/58; 8 on 6/12/59; 4 on 27/11/60; 7 on 26/11/61 (v. Annual Locality Reports for Firth of Thames). Elsewhere similar small terns have been widely reported in coastal areas from Rangaunu Bay to L. Ellesmere.



Drawings by C. G. Cathie of heads of Little Tern (*S. albifrons*) and Fairy Tern (*S. nereis*) in breeding dress; based on sketches made in the field and photographs.

On 31/3/62 when we visited the stretch of coast where these terns have most frequently been seen, we found on the tidal flats near Kairito Creek a gray carpet of some 3000 resting Wrybills (*A. frontalis*) among which were some of the rarer arctic waders and also two small terns, perhaps the last of the seven seen earlier in the same summer.