

We paid a second visit at 2 p.m. on 11/6/60, this time having with us 7 x 30 binoculars. Using the boat, we found the Coots, ten as before, on the south side of the lake in a sheltered bay with native bush and flax around the edge, one of the first places on the lake to catch the early morning sun. We were able to row to about fifty yards from the Coots; but as we tried to draw nearer, they would take off, first running on top of the water; then flying for about 100 yards before landing.

— J. S. HEIGHWAY

On a trip through central Hawke's Bay on 24/11/62, I investigated a rumour that a pair of Coots (*Fulica atra*) had been seen on Horseshoe Lake, Patangata. This lake, as its name implies is more or less the shape of a horseshoe and so has a comparatively long shoreline for the small amount of open water. Most of the shoreline is in grass, but patches of scrub, willows and dense raupo offer plenty of cover for waterfowl. Some acres of the surface of the lake are covered with the Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*).

A lake such as this is not easily searched at any time and on this visit the short time at my disposal, plus a strong choppy wind, precluded a thorough census. However, I did locate ten Coots, four pairs and two single birds. They were all fairly close to cover and were repeatedly diving for weed, which was plentiful. A mustelid was seen in the area where one pair of Coots seemed to be nesting.

Elsewhere in Hawke's Bay Coots have been recorded on several occasions at L. Tutira since 1954, the biggest count of ten being made by Mr. J. S. Heighway in June, 1960. There are many other lakes in the district which could harbour Coots. It should perhaps be mentioned that during the recent search for Black-fronted Dotterels (*C. melanops*), all lakes in the vicinity of Hastings, Fernhill and Taradale were examined but no Coots were seen.

— NORMAN MACKENZIE

[Although there is no mention of Coots in the North Island either in the Checklist (1953) or in Oliver (1955), they have now been recorded on at least five waters from the Wairarapa to Auckland.—Ed.]



#### BLACK-FRONTED TERN AT GREYMOUTH

ON 10/11/62 I located an unusual tern for this area at the Taramakau rivermouth. It was resting with c. 170 White-fronted Terns. I was unable to get across the river to it but after long study through binoculars I decided that it was probably a Black-fronted Tern (*C. albobristatus*). Next day I checked at high tide and was lucky to find it with a small flock of White-fronted Terns. It rested on the edge of the flock and when disturbed flew away for a short time. It was easily picked from the other birds in flight by its very white rump, grey overall plumage, and apparently short tail. When fishing it just flew low over the surface and apparently picked food from the water. At rest, the orange bill was most noticeable, as were the legs of similar hue when it took off in flight. The forehead, nape, and crown were all black, and a white band ran below the black on either side of the head. The general plumage was a greyish colour. I studied the bird closely in good light while it was preening from a range of about

ten yards. I confirmed my original opinion that it was a Black-fronted Tern in adult plumage.

— P. GRANT

[This is a very interesting record because the Black-fronted Tern, which is such a familiar bird on the riverbeds east of the Southern Alps, is virtually unknown west of the main range; and most ornithologists visiting Westland have failed to find one either along the riverbeds, some of which appear to provide quite suitable habitats, or at the estuaries.—Ed.]



#### BLACK-FRONTED TERN IN KAIPARA IN SUMMER

As far as the records go the northern limit of the winter range of the Black-fronted Tern (*C. albostratus*) is Kaipara Harbour, where small flocks have twice been found resting on a derelict jetty at Tangaihi on the Northern Wairoa River, 16 on 23/4/55 and 14 on 15/6/57 (*Notornis* VI, 244, and VII, 197). Since it is far from certain that this predominantly South Island tern habitually travels so far north to winter, it was all the more surprising to find one in Kaipara in summer. On 11/11/62 Lt. A. Y. Norris, R.N., J. L. Kendrick, P. D. G. Skegg, R. H. Sibson and I crossed the sandy tidal flats beyond Taporā to the big island, built of sand dunes with some scrub in the hollows, and walked around it.

On the outer side facing Kaipara Heads were c. 500 White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*), some just preparing to nest — only one egg was seen — and on the edge of the colony many immature non-breeders, identifiable by the height of the white on their foreheads. Apart by itself was an obvious Black-fronted Tern. It was very approachable: and as a result was most satisfactorily photographed in colour both at rest and on the wing by J.L.K. From its plumage we judged that it was about a year old and certainly immature, for though bill and feet were orange, the crown was not black but speckled. In flight the white rump contrasted vividly with the general grayness of its upper surface.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that as we walked back across the wet sands, we counted at least thirteen Little Terns (*S. albigrons*) resting with a big mixed pack of waders, mainly Godwits and Knots. We looked in vain for a pair of Fairy Terns (*S. nereis*) which were suspected of breeding on the island last year.

— R. B. SIBSON



#### LITTLE TERNS AT OTAGO HEADS

On 13/11/62 a visit to the mole at Aramoana, Otago Harbour, showed two very small terns sitting beside White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*). Half the size of the latter, they had black bills, reddish-black legs, gray back and wings, white forehead and crown, black band round back of head to the beak, tail white with shallow notch; and on the back the spotted mottling of juveniles. They seemed to me to be Little Terns (*S. albigrons*) possibly five or six months old. After flying off they fished like the White-fronted Terns which were working far out. On a subsequent visit they could not be found.

— W. T. POPPELWELL