

ROOKS NESTING IN DEAD TREE

On 20/10/62 while taking part in the search for Black-fronted Dotterels (*C. melanops*) along the Tutaekuri River, I was diverted for a short while by the cawing of Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*). The size of the Dartmoor rookery is given as 45 nests by Bull (*Notornis* VII, 152). What appeared to be the main rookery now consisted of eight nests in the top of a very tall gum; but I was surprised to see Rooks visiting two nests in an isolated dead tree which was growing on the edge of a former river-terrace where it sloped steeply away for about 50 feet to the present river-flat. The lower ends of a few jagged limbs remained near the top of the tree. The two occupied nests, in which eggs or young birds were being brooded, were wedged up against the main trunk in crutches formed by the dead limbs at about 60 and 70 feet. They were exposed to all the winds that blow. On the river-flat were plenty of trees such as poplars and pines, which seemed suitable for nesting. But these two pairs of Rooks seemed deliberately to have sought out the most exposed site available. I have seen many rookeries, mostly in England, and as a boy collected many Rook's eggs; but I cannot recall having seen anywhere else Rooks' nests built in such a way in a dead tree or in such an exposed situation.

— R. B. SIBSON

BLACK SWANS FEEDING ON WILLOW LEAVES

On 27/9/1962 at Lake Okareka we witnessed a strange manner of feeding by a pair of Black Swans (*C. atratus*) with two well-grown cygnets still in the down. A weeping willow growing on the lake verge had spread its long drooping shoots over the water. The parents with necks stretched to their limit, were busily pulling off the leaves and shoots and dropping them on to the water, to be greedily devoured by the young birds.

What was so surprising was the systematic method employed by the adults. The tough whip-like shoots were pruned to the maximum height of the reach, i.e. about four feet, of the long necks before starting on a new section. In other words, a section of the area was completely eaten out before the birds attacked another. In effect an unwitting display of avian economy.

— C. D. BLOMFIELD

— M. J. S. BLACK

SELECTIVE FEEDING OF SHINING CUCKOO

On 18/12/62 a slightly injured Shining Cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) came into my hands, and the opportunity was taken over a period of several days to observe its feeding preferences. Caterpillars of all kinds were taken avidly, and passed rapidly through the bill from end to end, up to eight times with the large specimens, the caterpillar at the same time being very vigorously shaken, obviously to expel some unpalatable juices. It was then swallowed, however large, in one rapid motion. Pear-slug, the larva of the introduced European saw-fly (*Caliroa limacina*) was also much favoured, and swallowed without any preliminary maceration. No interest was shown in earthworms, woodlice, or other ground-dwelling bugs, nor in various wood-boring grubs. Spiders and houseflies were at first accepted, and then discarded as though distasteful. Small cicadas were readily taken, however, and given a few hard knocks, but insufficient to kill or stun the insects, which were swallowed while still very much alive.

— A. BLACKBURN