

**BLACK-FRONTED TERN** — One on derelict jetty at Kidd's on 30/3/63. Details of plumage carefully noted by J.U. Could not be found again. Apparently the first record for Manukau since 1886. (N.Z.B.N. 3, 10).

**CASPIAN TERN** — 30 on 30/10/62; 23 on summer census, 16/12/62; 230+ on 26/4/63; 112, on winter census, 23/6/63.

**WHITE-FRONTED TERN** — Very few seen in early spring; 4 had returned to shellbank on 3/11/62. Then things moved quickly. Nov. 13th 200+ nesting. 18 eggs. 17th, 250+. 81 nests c/1; 15 c/2. 26th, 300+. 113 nests c/1; 58, c/2. Dec. 4th. 325+ 110 nests c/1; 52 c/2. 5 chicks just hatched. 11th. 186 nests 88 c/1; 16 c/2; 47 with chick; 28 with 1 egg and 1 chick; 7 with 2 chicks; 1 chick running. Jan. 8th. Several young birds flying. 11th. 100+ adults left. 20th. c. 50 adults; 2 eggs still unhatched. Feb. 8th. Only 20 adults left with 3 young. By mid-February the shellbank was deserted; but up to 40 rested on the derelict jetty till the end of April. None in May or June.

**TERN (Sp.?)** — Small dark-billed terns, *albifrons* or *nercis*, were seen as follows in Kidd's bay: 2 on 30/10/62; 3 on 16/2/63, 3/3/63, and 18/3/63.

**SHINING CUCKOO** — 1 whistling strongly at Kidd's on 27/9/63.

**MALAY SPOTTED DOVE** — Has now reached Papakura as it spreads south.

**FERNBIRD** — The colony in the saltmarsh scrub along Kidd's bay continues to thrive.

— H.R.McK., R.B.S.

#### MANAWATU — (a) RANGITIKEI ESTUARY

**S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER** — 3 on 13/1/63 and 24/2/63; 4 on 24/3/63.

**N.I. (VARIABLE) OYSTERCATCHER** — 2 pairs breeding on sand-spit at the estuary on 17/11/62.

**GOLDEN PLOVER** — 8 through summer 1962-63; 12 on 24/2/63, 16 on 24/3/63.

**WRYBILL** — HIGHEST count 27 on 24/2/63.

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** — One on 24/2/63.

**ASIATIC WHIMBREL** — One present January to March.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** — 145 on 17/10/62, mostly on passage; summer population fluctuated around 50.

**KNOT** — 11 on 17/10/62, 17 on 17/11/62.

**RED-NECKED STINT** — Present at least from September to March; highest count 6 on 24/3/63.

**BLACK-BACKED GULL** — 2 pairs defending territory in the estuary on 13/1/63, but nests not found; colony one mile north of estuary is still thriving.

— I.G.A., M.J.I.

#### (b) MANAWATU ESTUARY

**BLACK SHAG** — Up to 25 throughout year; breeding in the district.

**LITTLE BLACK SHAG** — One seen by I.G.A. on 15/6/63, at first perched on a dead tree with adult and juvenile Black Shag and one adult White-throated Shag, allowing excellent opportunities for comparison. It then flew down to the river beside an adult Black Shag. Its small size, relatively small head, and dark face and bill differentiated it from the Black Shag; while the narrow, dark bill and differently shaped head, short tail, prominent black feather margins

on the upperparts (much more conspicuous than in either of the other two species), and less streamlined appearance in flight distinguished it from the Little Shag. This appears to be the first record of this species at Manawatu Estuary.

**LITTLE SHAG** — One or two of either plumage phase usually present.

**SPOTTED SHAG** — One seen by M.J.I. on beach on 7/3/63 with a group of Black Shags. When approached, it remained when the Black Shags had flown off, until observer was within a few yards.

**WHITE HERON** — 2 or 3 reported in April-May between the Estuary and Foxton; one at Foxton on 15/9/63, with well-developed plumes.

**REEF HERON** — One on 6/3/63 at north heads.

**WHITE-FACED HERON** — Breeding in the district.

**BITTERN** — One on mudflat on 18/8/63; usually they keep out of sight in the swamps of the district.

**ROYAL SPOONBILL** — 9 on 3/11/62, at least 7 of which appeared to be first year birds; none seen in December though they may have been elsewhere in the district; 2 immature birds on 12/1/63; numbers in March gradually increasing from 4 on 2nd to 13 on 23rd; 37 on 21/4/63; 42 on 1/5/63; 25 on 15/6/63; 18 on 18/8/63, including several in full breeding plumage. Of 13 remaining on 15/9/63, 9 were adults in breeding plumage and 4 were first year birds.

**BLACK SWAN** — One on 12/1/63.

**GREY DUCK & MALLARD** — Few except in winter: 130 Grey Duck and 150 Mallard on 15/6/63.

**SHOVELER** — 7 on 22/12/63.

**HARRIER** — Resident.

**PUKEKO** — Resident, breeding at the estuary.

**S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER** — Further increase on last year, with a stable winter population of 65 from early March till late June. Summer population 1962-63 remained about 12. 21 remaining on 15/9/63.

**N.I. (VARIABLE) OYSTERCATCHER** — Maximum of 18 on 15/6/63.

**GOLDEN PLOVER** — Maximum 28 on 1/12/62; most departed during March 1963; on 7/3/63, 22 were seen, of which 14 had some black on the belly and 2 were almost in full breeding plumage. One seen distantly on 18/8/63 may have wintered in New Zealand, but appeared to be very white about the face and to have some black underneath. No return migrants had arrived by 15/9/63.

**BANDED DOTTEREL** — Pattern similar to last year.

**WRYBILL** — Numbers fluctuating, but seasonal changes not marked: 6 on 3/11/62, 1 on 22/12/62, 6 on 12/1/63, 13 on 6/3/63, 11 on 15/6/63, 10 on 18/8/63.

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** — One on 13/10/63, appeared very shy and cowered when a White-faced Heron landed nearby. It was watched stalking crabs, with a much more stately gait than that of the Whimbrel.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** — Maximum 300 on 22/12/62; 226 still present on 23/3/63. but only about 6 wintered.

**KNOT** — 14 on 29/9/62, 24 on 3/11/62, 2 on 22/12/62, none in January, one very red on 2/3/63.

**SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** — 1 on 13/10/62, not located again till 12/1/63, when 2 were present; 2 on 6/3/63.

**AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER** — One first seen on 12/1/63, and still present on 7/3/63, the first recorded at this estuary. It

appeared surprisingly small by comparison with the two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers present, but had the very conspicuous gorget, fairly uniform brown streaked colouring above (without rufous on crown), and distinctive call of the American Pectoral Sandpiper.

CURLEW SANDPIPER — One seen on 2/3/63.

RED-NECKED STINT — One on 3/11/62 and one on 12/1/63.

PIED STILT — Pattern similar to previous years; highest count 204 on 15/6/63.

ARCTIC SKUA — 7 just offshore on 7/3/63.

BLACK-BACKED GULL — Usually about 100 in the estuary, and a few breed in rather isolated nests in the less accessible areas. In December 1962 a nest was constructed and vigorously defended just above the normal high tide mark on the exposed flats. Five pairs bred on the open beach three miles south of Manawatu Heads.

RED-BILLED & BLACK-BILLED GULLS — On 12/1/63 there were 35 Black-billed Gulls but only 10 Red-billed Gulls. Usually the latter predominate.

BLACK-FRONTED TERN — 3 on 6/3/63.

CASPIAN TERN — Maximum 35 on 22/12/62. No breeding colonies have yet been found in the district.

LITTLE TERN — One on 3/11/62, in typical eclipse plumage of *S. albifrons*. The first recorded at Manawatu Estuary, though one was seen at Rangitikei Estuary in 1960-61.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN — Common on this coast, 1500 within about three miles on 7/3/63.

— I.G.A., M.J.I.

## SHORT NOTES

### COOT BEHAVIOUR AT OKAREKA

I have been able to make some observations on the habits of the Australian Coot (*Fulica atra*) on Lake Okareka, Rotorua. These birds were first identified by Mr. Blomfield and Mr. Spens-Black in the spring of 1962. Since then, the original pair have been producing two broods, one of two and one of four, giving a total of eight birds altogether. About the end of July this year three disappeared, leaving five; and, so far, I have heard no mention of them on any of the other lakes about Rotorua.

On Lake Okareka itself these birds seem to have confined themselves to a reed-bed on the south-eastern side of the main peninsula. The reed-bed is about a hundred and fifty yards long by about twenty-five yards wide, broken here and there by strips of open water. Here the Coots spend their time with the Pukekos and a small flock of Scaup (*A. novaeseelandiae*), which they treat with a certain amount of contempt as they can both outswim and outdive them. An unsuspecting Scaup is frequently attacked from behind, if it should happen to be sitting in the Coot's line of advance; a flock of them is sometimes taken unawares when a Coot dives from the rear and suddenly reappears in their midst with a beakful of weed.

With their rich black colouring on the upper parts, shading into grey below, Coots look very handsome birds as they move through the water. At a distance when seen from the rear they could be mistaken for Scaup, but when seen from the front the conspicuous white shield above the bill, which shows up plainly over a distance of several hundred yards, leaves no doubt as to the bird's identity.