

By contrast *T. melanoleuca* is darker, with perceptible chevron bars and vermiculation on the axillaries. The published photographs in the paper under review (Plates XXV and XXVI) are most consistent in this respect with the specimen of *T. flavipes*. It must be remembered, too, that *T. melanoleuca* has a relatively as well as absolutely longer bill than *T. flavipes*. In the former the linear distance from the back of the eye to the base of the culmen is less than half the length of the bill; in the latter it is fully half or more than half. This can be tested in any side-on photograph, such as XXVa in the paper cited.

These further speculations cannot be claimed to be conclusive, but they do prompt the reflection that:—

- (a) Subjective speculation can be a stimulating exercise up to a point.
- (b) When the available recorded data in the literature are, as in the case of the two Yellowlegs, rather meagre for such common birds, are sometimes defective, and occasionally contradictory, the field observer can be left speculating.
- (c) In default of a fresh specimen even a fifty-year old skin with full data can help the interpretation of photographs considerably.

If the submissions advanced above are accepted as valid the Porirua bird could have been a Lesser Yellowlegs.

REFERENCE

FLEMING, 1963: *Notornis* 10: 258-262.



SHORT NOTE

WELCOME SWALLOW IN SOUTHLAND

A bird observed at Otatara, near Invercargill, intermittently from November 1963 to early March 1964 can be described as follows:

About the size of a pipit but in flight and habits unlike any bird I have seen. The flight was fast — fluttering — weaving, somewhat bat-like. The bird was in association with sparrows, greenfinch and chaffinch around the farm, close to the buildings at times. Invariably separated from the other birds when they took flight. It landed very seldom — would soar quite high on its own till lost to view and then next moment would be seen flying fast very close to the ground, closely following contours. It would persist in this for ten minutes or so over a wide area, frequently coming into sight again, and then would disappear. It was observed perching only once in rather a bad light. From the front view the bird was very dark all over, either dark grey or brownish, with a small patch of diffused buffy yellow at the throat. The colour in flight was a rich velvety brownish-black (almost lambent) with a small patch of creamy yellow on the upper tail coverts or very low on the rump, seen from behind. The beak appeared to be dark and short, the neck short and the eye dark. The tail was relatively long but no other feature about the tail was obvious.

The flight was so fast and erratic that although I kept the field glasses handy I never succeeded in viewing it through them.

— L. E. HENDERSON

[This account and an accompanying sketch answer the description of a juvenile Welcome Swallow.—Ed.]