

LITTLE EGRETS AT GREYMOUTH

On 2nd May, 1964, after I had just discussed the Cattle Egret report with Mr. Jones, Cobden, I visited a popular wading-bird pool at Cobden. I was agreeably surprised to see three Little Egrets, *Egretta garzetta*, and one White Heron, *Egretta alba modesta*, together in one pool. I hurriedly picked up Mr. Jones and took him to the scene. In good light and at close range he studied the birds carefully and said that they were not the same as the bird he had seen at Coal Creek. The White Heron was much bigger than the Cattle Egret and the Little Egrets were sligher and smaller than the Cattle Egret. The Little Egrets were behaving in their usual frantic way and it was amusing to see them dashing around fishing very actively. Two raised their wings at each other as if about to begin sparring and, when one landed alongside a White-faced Heron, *Notophoxyx novaehollandiae*, both raised their feathers noticeably and displayed at each other. Later, the two that seemed to keep together had a further display session.

Unfortunately, I was not able to spend much time observing the birds that day. However, the bills of the birds were noticeably different. Two had black upper mandibles from the tip to nearly the facial mask, the lower mandibles being yellowish green. The other bird had black upper and lower mandibles from the tip back for some distance, then changed to orange on upper and lower mandibles before reaching the facial mask. I saw the last-mentioned bird at close range in flight and its feet and a short anklet above the feet were a greenish colour. Underneath the feet was not noticeably yellow as in a bird seen here previously; more greenish (*Notornis* 9: 4, p. 122). The upper parts of the legs were dark grey, then grey down the front of the legs until the green anklet was reached; the back of the legs turned from dark grey to a greenish colour above the tarsus and this continued down to the greenish anklet. On one occasion I saw a short plume from the nape. I was soon unable to locate more than one Little Egret, my last sighting being on the 10th May.

— P. GRANT



CATTLE EGRET NEAR MASTERTON

On 25/5/64, R. Stidolph and B. Irons and I visited the dairy farm of Mr. W. Greig near Masterton and identified a "small White Heron" as being a Cattle Egret, *Ardeola ibis*. The bird had been at the farm for a week but when R. Walker (who had been told of the bird by Mr. Greig) had visited the farm he was unlucky enough not to have sighted it.

The day of our visit was overcast but the bird was clearly seen to have a yellow bill. The small dark portion at the tip was not clearly seen because feeding on the muddy fields had somewhat discoloured the area. The legs and feet were a dark greyish colour. No buff coloration was visible — the plumage was pure white. In general appearance it was stockier and shorter than the Little Egret and was considerably smaller than the White Heron.

Feeding characteristics were typical of this species in that it was constantly in close attendance on the dairy herd. Mr. A. Greig said that when the cows were taken in for milking the bird flew over to other cattle in another field.

On 30/5/64, which was bright and sunny, Mr. Irons and

Mr. Hooper of Masterton visited the farm again and took several photographs but were unable to get close enough for a really good shot. However, this time they were able to confirm that the bird had a dark portion at the tip of its bill. The bird was last seen on the farm on about 13/6/64.

The writer believes that this is the first confirmed North Island record and the third for New Zealand; the first being on a farm at Belfast, North Canterbury, on 28/9/63 (*Notornis* 10: 316), and the second in the Irwell district, some 25 miles southwest of Christchurch on the western shore of Lake Ellesmere on 1/6/64 (*Notornis* 10: 383), [and a fourth in Westland — see P. Grant in this issue.—Ed.]

— B. W. BOESON



BLACK-FRONTED TERNS ON THE WEST COAST

Further to the note by H. R. McKenzie in *Notornis*, March, 1964, recording the Black-fronted Tern near Haast, I now have to report a sighting further south than this on the Westland coast, viz. at Awarua Point at the northern entrance to Big Bay (or Awarua Bay). On 13/5/64 three adults were seen about twenty yards distant, flying into a rain squall. It is not impossible that they breed in this area as there are suitable shingly stretches of beach at many points along the coast. These were the only birds of this species seen along this coast between the Hope River mouth and Big Bay, and none was seen on the beach of Big Bay itself. I recorded none along the coast from Big Bay to Martin's Bay during a trip in May, 1963. Thus Awarua Point remains the southernmost sighting of this species along the west coast so far.

— PETER CHILD



INFORMATION WANTED

Fairy Prion. Would any member who has unrecorded information, however slight, on this species please send it to Mr. P. Harper, 4 Barbara Grove, Moera, Lower Hutt, who is at present writing up a study of it.

Saddleback. Mr. P. Skegg, 32 Manawa Road, Remuera, Auckland, is collecting information on the decline of both North and South Island Saddlebacks. He would welcome any unpublished records or knowledge of out-of-the-way references which members may have.

Spur-winged Plover. With this species now spreading rapidly through the South Island, it is intended to summarise its status and habits in the near future. Would members please be sure to send in to the Nest Record and Recording Schemes anything they know about its numbers, breeding and general habits in this or previous seasons.—B.D.H.

Kingfisher. There is a general impression in some districts that there may be a strong seasonal movement of Kingfishers within New Zealand. Members whose work or daily journeys would enable them to keep regular notes of numbers seen in favoured places are invited to keep such notes and send in an annual summary of them to the Recording Scheme. Were this done in all districts and by many individuals, it should soon be apparent whether Kingfisher movements are national, local, or imaginary ones, and whether further investigation is warranted. — B.D.H.