

and shape of the bill was very evident; that of the Little Egret being longer, more slender and sharply pointed.

When feeding, the Cattle Egrets kept to the grass near the water, while the Little Egret waded in water up to its knees.

I had another look at them on 30/9/64 while they were feeding among cattle, and although I could not get very close, I could see that the head of one of them was of a distinct buff colour. When alarmed on this occasion, they flew over my head and alighted on a macrocarpa tree.

— E. B. JONES



REPORTED LITTLE BITTERN AT MEREMERE

Re the article "Little Bittern at Meremere," P. J. Howard, *Notornis* X, 317-319, and the further article "Note on Little Bittern," Dr. R. A. Falla, *Notornis* X, 412-413. Since this identification is now doubtful the parties concerned are studying the matter more deeply, with valued help from Dr. R. A. Falla and Mr. E. G. Turbott, and it is hoped to publish the findings later.

— P. J. HOWARD, J. L. KENDRICK, H. R. MCKENZIE



PLUMAGE OF BLACK FANTAIL

Oliver's *N.Z. Birds* (2nd ed., p. 495) implies that the female Black Fantail (*Rhipidura f. fuliginosa*) may be distinguished from the male by the presence of white spots over the ear coverts. Brian Bell, however (*pers. comm.*), had his doubts. That his doubts were justified was demonstrated by my observation of a mated pair of Black Fantails both of which showed white spots. This pair had four eggs and reared four young. The nest was visited frequently and only the two birds were in attendance. The remote possibility of a polygamous nesting with, by chance, only the two females being seen, may confidently be excluded.

The presence of white spots over the ear coverts of the Black Fantail, therefore, does not necessarily mean that the individual is a female.

— M. F. SOPER



OBITUARY

Major Robert Adams Wilson, D.S.O., who died at his home 'Lethenty,' Bulls, on 27th November 1964, in his 89th year, was a New Zealander distinguished in many fields of interest and of enterprise. A son of the late Sir James Wilson, a Rangitikei pioneer, he was borne at Bulls in 1875 and educated at Wanganui College. In the years before World War I, he was engaged in establishing saw-mills along the newly-opened main trunk line and for recreation playing in a Rangitikei Polo Team which won the Saville Cup. After military service with the Royal Garrison Artillery 1916-18, he took up farming in his home district and made a success of developing coastal sandhill country and establishing impressive records with Friesian dairy cattle. Within the limits of a life-span of near four score years and ten, he found time for zestful participation in such active sports as wildfowl shooting and deerstalking, maintained a consistent skill at bridge, an

interest in horticulture, was a wide and studious reader, and in his later years a writer.

This tribute is concerned mainly with Robert Wilson as a naturalist and ornithologist. It was an interest developed very early in his life. While still a schoolboy he participated in one of the Sub-antarctic cruises (1891) of the Government steamer. His journal shows that while he listened to and recorded the opinions of the learned passengers and the experienced Captain Fairchild, he also made his own independent observations and posed his own pertinent questions. He maintained this independence throughout many field ventures in later years, but wrote and published very little because he chose to give encouragement and help to his companions. One of these was the late Edgar F. Stead, another, the late G. A. Buddle, and both in their published work have given grateful acknowledgment of his help. On any expedition, especially with younger men, he sought the unwanted tasks of camp maintenance. This loyalty was the reflection of a character without guile, and generous to a fault. He took pleasure in encouraging the work of younger men at all stages with unobtrusive gifts of rare books and with loans of other literature and field notes. It was only within the last ten years when strenuous field work had become impracticable and most of his contemporaries had passed on that he turned his attention to recording for publication. The biography of his father had already been ably written by L. J. Wild, so he planned a series of books to deal in brief with different departments of his own life interests. The first of these was 'Bird Islands of New Zealand' (Whitcombe and Tombs 1959), followed by 'My Stalking Memories' (Pegasus Press 1961) and 'A Two Years Interlude — France 1916-1918' (1962). At the time of his death he was compiling material for another volume on timber and sawmilling.

Major Wilson was pre-deceased by his wife and is survived by one daughter, one son, and six grandchildren.

—R. A. F.



NOTICE

Dr. A. M. Bailey, of the Denver Museum of Natural History, has forwarded six copies of his book "Sub-Antarctic Campbell Island" for award to junior members, i.e. up to 18 years of age. Awards for 1964/65 will be made as follows:

One copy for the best contribution to the Nest Records Scheme.

One for original work, either for the Recording Scheme, or published in "Notornis," if suitable for publication.

One to the most outstanding member of King's College Bird Club.

Three similar awards will be made for 1965/66.



NEST RECORDS SCHEME

As Mr. J. C. R. Claridge is retiring from the position of Organiser of the Nest Records Scheme on 31st March, 1965, contributors are requested to forward all cards for the current season to reach him by 28th February.