

## ANOTHER LITTLE WHIMBREL AT MIRANDA

The tide was falling at the old Lime Works site on 4/1/66 and most of the hundreds of roosting waders had left for the mudflat feeding grounds when a New Zealand Dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*) and another bird of rather similar size were noticed at the end of a low shell spit by the Miranda creek. E. K. S. (Ken) Rowe of Rangiora, his family and the writer approached and easily identified it as a Little Whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*). From some distance it was seen that it had broad light bands above its eyes and a slight but clear light median stripe on the upper crown but not forward onto the front of the head; its upper surface and breast were a strong brown, the belly lighter. The bill was about two inches long and curved only moderately. Ken Rowe and one of his sons crept up to within a few yards and verified these points. It did not call when it flew.

Near the same place it was seen again and recognised by A. M. C. ("Mike") Davis of Auckland on 9/1/66.

On 11/1/66 a party of New Zealand watchers had the pleasure of studying this bird with Dr. Roger Tory Peterson, Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill and Mrs. Pettingill of U.S.A. The visitors were particularly interested because this bird is the Asiatic counterpart of their Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*) which was gunned to near-extinction or perhaps complete extinction. On this occasion the Little Whimbrel was first seen on the top of a high shell ridge on the beach, again with the tide falling. It flew inland to the well-known Miranda Pools where Mrs. Beth Brown located it with a family of Pied Stilts only a few yards inside the road fence. Further notes were made to the effect that its legs were blue grey, the latter half of the bill flesh coloured and the forward part brown, the back patterned brown and grey, the brown being somewhat rufous. It was very tame.

On its favourite shelly ridge it was studied at leisure at a few yards on 28/1/66 by R. B. Sibson.

The last sighting was at the Miranda Pools on 8/2/66 when it flew from rough ground close to Mr. and Mrs. W. Davidson, Minn., U.S.A., Misses D. and E. Roberts and A. J. Goodwin, John and Beth Brown, Mrs. H. M. McK. and H. R. McK.

It was noted by the writer that the bill of this bird was appreciably less curved than that of the one seen on 28/3/64 at Karaka, Manukau Harbour (*Notornis* 11, 99) and the one, presumed to be the same as the one of 28/3/64, seen at Miranda on 13/10/64 (*Notornis* 12, 110). According to what is known of normal growth in the genus *Numenius* this may indicate that the present bird is in its first year.

— H. R. McKENZIE



## PECTORAL SANDPIPERS INLAND IN HAWKES BAY

On the morning of 17/1/66 I noticed from the Porangahau road numerous White-faced Herons and scores of Pied Stilts in the shallows along the eastern shore of Lake Hatuma, near Waipukurau; and I was fortunate in finding a grassy 'public road' which led directly down to the edge of the lake. The seasonal recession of the water level had occurred, leaving exposed quantities of shells of dead freshwater mussels (Kakahi), which along one stretch were so thick that they almost formed a beach. Here about a dozen Black-billed Gulls

(*L. bulleri*) were resting and a scattered flock of c. 80 Banded Dotterels (*C. bicinctus*) was feeding among the short herbage or over the bare mud; and while I was carefully glassing them in the hope perhaps of finding a Black-fronted Dotterel (*C. melanops*) among them — I didn't; and so far there is virtually no evidence that Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels flock together after the breeding season in Hawkes Bay — I noticed two sandpipers feeding close together on the wetter mud; and then, partly hidden by a tussock a few yards further away, a third sandpiper.

The first two had strongly marked gorgets of dense spotting; the chest markings of the third were little more than a buffy wash. I was able to study the three at leisure at a range of about fifty feet; and so to note other differences which confirmed that two were American Pectoral Sandpipers (*C. melanotos*) and one a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*C. acuminata*). The legs of *melanotos* were yellower and their bills slightly robuster, with a yellowish tone showing at the base. *Acuminata* was the odd man out not only in markings, but also in behaviour; for while the three sometimes flew together, the two Americans on alighting rested or fed close together, while the Siberian kept rather apart.

As these Sandpipers in New Zealand are primarily birds of brackish coastal lagoons, it was interesting to find both species about twenty miles inland. There is obviously a good deal of wader migration up and down the east coast of the North Island; along which estuaries and lagoons, such as Porangahau, Westshore, Ahuriri, Whakaki, Muriwai, provide resting places at conveniently spaced intervals. Strong east winds might push tired migrants inland. If they were lucky enough to find such a quiet and well-stocked feeding ground as the shallows of Lake Hatuma, they might stay for weeks or even months.

— R. B. SIBSON



## REVIEWS

Gillham, Mary E., 1963 — *Instructions to Young Ornithologists IV. Sea-Birds*. Museum Press Ltd., London, 144 pp.

Dr. Gillham will still be known to readers of *Notornis* for her pioneering work carried out a few years ago on the effect of various colonially nesting birds on the plant ecology of sea-birds' nesting sites in New Zealand and elsewhere.

The present book is a part of a series on ornithology for beginners, initiated by the Brompton Library, which has already covered other aspects such as biology and behaviour. Although primarily written for young ornithologists in Britain, this volume contains much information on birds from New Zealand and Australian seas.

The book rightly begins with a classification of sea-birds, followed by chapters devoted to description of various ways of flying and feeding habits of sea-birds. These chapters are succeeded by a description of sea-birds on land and by a succinct final chapter on their breeding habits. These descriptions are accompanied by eminently pleasant and useful line drawings and a number of original photographs. The book concludes with appendices giving a map of sea-birds localities round the British Isles, a glossary and a good index.