

## ANOTHER TATTLER IN MANUKAU HARBOUR

About one mile to the west of the Mangere end of the Onehunga bridge in upper Manukau and at the end of Kiwi Esplanade is a rocky bay. Lying between two lava-flows from Mangere Mountain, it contains numerous rocky reefs and one prominent shellbank which at full tide is often packed with roosting waders, especially S.I. Pied Oystercatchers, Pied Stilts and Godwits.

On the evening of 22/11/63, when I visited this bay at low tide, I was puzzled to see a dark shape sharply silhouetted against the water on the end of one of the reefs. Access was easy by a circuitous route which enabled me to have the evening sun at my back. The solitary bird was clearly a Tattler, mostly white underneath and showing a minimum of barring, so that it was either an adult in winter plumage or a young bird, more probably the latter. My problem was to try to decide whether it was *incana* or *brevipes*. When I was within about a chain, the Tattler, after running nimbly about the reef, called briefly once as it rose, flitted low across the bay and settled on another reef. If the husky brevity of its call was a reliable pointer, it should have been a Siberian Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*).

The bay was evidently to its liking, for the Tattler stayed at least two months, during which it was seen four times in the bay and once in a swamp about half a mile away. On 8/12/63 it was watched by M. J. Hogg and D. G. Fenwick as it was walking about among 150 Oystercatchers on the shellbank. At 5.30 p.m. on 26/12/63 my wife and I saw it again. At first it was isolated on a reef; then with the rising tide, it flew in to settle among about 70 Stilts in a shallow pool; finally it moved on to the shellbank to rest among the Oystercatchers. On 2/1/64 there was a very big tide, which forced all waders off the shellbank in 'Roadend Bay,' whence they had flown across farmland to a swampy area, formerly a creekhead, beside No. 4 pond of the A.M.D.B. Here the Tattler was found on a small patch of open ground amongst watercress and Bachelors Buttons.

It was last seen on 27/1/64 when it was back in the bay where it was originally found. Again the tide was rather high and the waders at the shellbank were restless. Godwits and Oystercatchers flew away; but the Tattler, after flying round with the Stilts, returned with them. Though I watched it on five occasions during its two months stay, not once was it possible to see clearly the length of the groove along the side of the bill; and though I flushed it several times, not once did I hear it utter a prolonged trill. In fact it was rather a silent bird. During the early summer of 1963, other species of Asiatic waders, namely a Broad-billed Sandpiper (*L. falcinellus*), a Green-shank (*T. nebularia*) and three Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits (*L. melanuroides*) which are rarely reported in New Zealand, reached Manukau Harbour.

A rare American visitor, seen only on November 9th near Puketutu, was an Hudsonian Godwit (*L. haemastica*).

I have given this account in some detail because this is the first Tattler to be recorded in Manukau Harbour for some years. Between April 1955 and April 1959, numerous sightings by many observers of a Tattler along the Karaka shore between Urquhart's Point and Kidd's Bay are believed all to refer to the same bird. On 18/4/57 one was found resting among Pied Stilts and Wrybills in the Explosion Crater below the south-west slopes of Mangere Mountain; in April waders are very much on the move. This may have been a migrant passing through or it may have been the Karaka Tattler on a more extensive 'walkabout' than usual.

— R. B. SIBSON

[Since the autumn of 1965 there has been a veritable spate of reports on the sightings of Tattlers, the localities concerned being Kermadec; Tarawera estuary, B.O.P.; Waiongona estuary, New Plymouth; Farewell Spit; Kaikoura peninsula; Papanui Inlet, Otago. These will be published in a forthcoming issue.—Ed.]



### LONGEVITY OF WEKA

I am indebted to Mr. Charles Burland, of Patutahi, near Gisborne, for the following information on a pair of North Island Weka (*Gallirallus australis greyi*), which nested for many years in his garden, the same pair that is recorded in *Notornis* X, 300, as raising four broods within the year. Early in 1950, a year clearly fixed by other events, Mr. Burland took particular note of this pair breeding in his garden, the female being distinguished by unusually bright orange legs, and the male being a particularly friendly bird. He came to know the birds well, the male coming frequently to the house for food, and doing so daily when there were chicks. The hen, much more shy, came occasionally with the chicks. The same pair was observed breeding in the garden each year until 1963, since when no breeding has occurred; but the male still comes to the house occasionally, and the female is seen from time to time.

The pair's territory has always been strictly protected by Mr. Burland by excluding all dogs from the property, and other Weka transgressing are trapped and moved away from the area. As the birds bred in 1950, they must be at least 18 years old; and they are reported as still being in good plumage.

The Weka is known to be multiple-brooded, and if such longevity is common in the species, it can be readily understood how the Buff Weka (*G. a. hectori*) continues to survive in such large numbers in the Chatham Is., as does the N.I. Weka in the Gisborne district, despite severe persecution in both places.

— A. BLACKBURN