

GREENSHANK AT TIMARU

On the morning of 6/5/67 a strange wader was observed among Pied Stilts at Washdyke Lagoon, Timaru, from the sand bar which divides lagoon and sea. A closer examination was made possible by approaching the bird from the other side of the lagoon and notes were taken on its appearance and feeding habits.

Although it was once observed flying as part of a tight flock of Stilts, it kept largely to itself and was occasionally harassed by Stilts and Red-billed Gulls. The wader was streamlined in shape, grey above with darker wing primaries, and white below. The bill was dark and slightly upcurved. In flight the feet projected beyond the tail, and an inverted V of white extending up the back from the rump was very obvious. Although the leg colour was not ascertained we were left in no doubt that this bird was a Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), and our opinion was strongly confirmed on consultation with various reports and field guides.

The bird was again observed on 7/5/67 and 10/7/67. On both occasions the call was recorded as a fairly high-pitched, rather flute-like "teu-teu-teu."

The Greenshank was not found on 22/5/67, presumably having continued on a northward journey.

— B. R. KEELEY

— P. M. SAGAR

[Accumulating records seem to show that one or two immature Greenshanks remain in New Zealand during most winters. — Ed.]



REVIEW

Population Studies of Birds, David Lack, F.R.S., 1966. Clarendon Press, Oxford. New Zealand price \$8.20.

Any book by David Lack, the Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Ornithology at Oxford University, demands the attention of ornithologists in particular and of animal ecologists in general, especially if they are interested in population dynamics. Lack's present book is essentially a sequel to his *The Natural Regulation of Animal Numbers*, published in 1954, which created considerable interest then and which took one side of a controversy, the other side of which was supported by Andrewartha & Birch in their book, *The Distribution and Abundance of Animals*, which appeared in the same year.

The controversy, still very much alive, concerns whether natural populations of animals fluctuate essentially by chance between ill-defined limits (Andrewartha & Birch) or whether numbers are regulated between restricted limits by factors which tend to decrease dense populations and increase sparse ones (Lack). There are other distinguished ecologists on either side and my attempt briefly to define the controversy has oversimplified it.

In 1962 Wynne-Edwards tried to resolve it with his interesting and contentious book, *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behaviour*. This offered the theory (not very sympathetically received) that although food supplies ultimately limit natural populations, animals "avoid" reaching starvation level and destruction of their environment