

GIANT PETRELS IN LYTTTELTON HARBOUR

Over the months of October-November Lyttelton Harbour supports a somewhat static number of about thirty Giant Petrels (*M. giganteus*); but I cannot tell if they are the same birds day after day.

Eight years ago (1959) a bird of the white phase appeared in the harbour and was recorded on one day only. On 17/10/67 a similar bird was seen among a group of brown birds, but did not appear the next day or on any day since. These two white birds are the only ones I have seen in Lyttelton Harbour over twelve years.

I have come to the conclusion that our local Nellies are just passing through, staying only a day or two and then moving south; and that at this season they are replaced by about the same number each day. The Lyttelton Nellies normally arrive in the harbour, after following the inter-island steamer in from sea in the early morning.

On 13/10/67 I witnessed a group of Nellies seize a Black-backed Gull (*L. dominicanus*) that had moved too close to the offal on which they were feeding; and literally tear it apart. I have received several reports of similar incidents. I have also seen a Black-backed Gull catch and swallow a Housesparrow.

— B. N. NORRIS

[In "A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World," Darwin writes: "At Port St. Julian (Patagonia), these great petrels were seen killing and devouring young gulls." — Ed.]

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CATTLE EGRETS IN NORTHLAND

Two Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) spent the whole winter of 1966 on the farm of Mrs. F. Atkins, some three miles from Kaitaia. Mrs. Atkins had a paddock in which two bulls were kept. They being heavy animals and the ground rather soft, worms would come to the surface wherever the bulls walked, and made easy picking for the egrets. Sometimes when one of the bulls would lie down an egret would perch on it. The egrets disappeared in the spring and did not return for the winter of 1967.

— ROSS MICHIE

[Cattle Egrets have now been reported sporadically almost from one end of New Zealand to the other. In April 1967 one was found at Port Adventure, Stewart Island. — Ed.]

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WRYBILLS IN SOUTHLAND

From the sketchy evidence available it seems likely that a few Wrybills (*A. frontalis*) find their way to the coast of Southland almost annually; but only long term observation will reveal the pattern.

The following sightings have been made:—

1962: 1 in February at Waimatuku rivermouth.

1965: 3 on 2 October at Waituna lagoon in breeding plumage.

1966: 1 in February near Waimatuku rivermouth, among Banded Dotterels on turnip ground.

1967: 1 on 10 October at Invercargill estuary; and 3 on Oreti Beach. About a week later four were seen on Oreti Beach all in breeding plumage.

The nearest known breeding ground is about 150 miles northeast.

— ROGER SUTTON