

— D. H. Brathwaite

#### RED-NECKED AVOCET IN WESTLAND

My wife and I were on a visit to New Zealand. On 26/2/68 we found a Red-necked or Australian Avocet (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*) in the Orowaiti Lagoon, Westport. Somewhat larger than the Pied Stilts with which it was feeding, it had a white body with a black stripe along the mantle on each side, chestnut head and neck, slim black upcurved bill and greenish legs. It fed by means of a back and forth sideways sweeping motion of its bill in the shallows of the tidal flat. The first observation was from about 4 to 4.30 p.m. at a distance of 75 yards or less. The weather was clear and the tide was low. A later check was made at dusk after 6 p.m. We found the Avocet in the same locality and all points were confirmed.

— C. G. KAIGLER

[This is the first acceptable report of the sighting of an Australian Avocet in New Zealand since 1912, when a specimen, now in the Canterbury Museum, was shot at Lake Ellesmere. Further observations were made during April and May by B. A. Ellis, T. Hartley-Smith, R. Veitch, P. Grant, H. C. Hooper and G. Harrow. — Ed.]



#### A GOOD SUMMER FOR TEREK SANDPIPERS

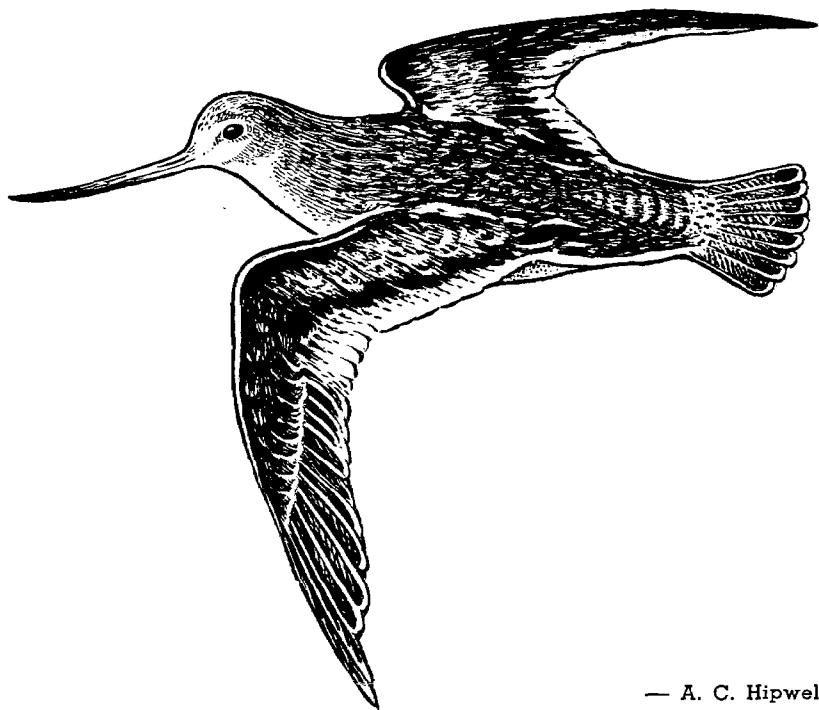
Reports from three separate localities and overlapping dates show that at least six Terek Sandpipers (*Tringa cinerea*) spent the summer of 1967-68 in New Zealand.

In the Firth of Thames, where H. R. McKenzie added the species to the New Zealand list in 1951 and where it is now recorded almost annually, three were found together on 23/12/67. (H.R.McK., R.B.S.) At full tide they were resting conspicuously on the top of a tangle of driftwood a little apart from other small waders, on the shellbank near the old limeworks. On 25/2/68 three were seen again, but not together; two being near the Miranda limeworks again; and one south of Kairito Creek on the edge of a big flock of

Wrybills, where it was startled into sudden activity by a Little Tern (*S. Albifrons*) which dropped out of the sky and alighted almost on top of it. (H.R.McK., R.B.S.) On 6/4/68 all three were reunited at the limeworks roost. (H.R.McK., M. J. Hogg) and two were still there on 18/4/68. (Mrs. P. Fooks).

In Kapara Harbour a Terek Sandpiper was found on 18/2/68 by Mrs. P. Fooks and Mrs. S. Reed. As the tide fell it was feeding among Wrybills and Dotterels in Ngapuke Creek just to the south of Jordan's farm. A month later on 17/3/68, presumably the same bird was found resting with about forty Red-breasted Dotterels (*C. obscurus*) and one Large Sand Dotterel (*C. leschenaulti*) in a grassy paddock. It was ceaselessly alert, with its long thin upturned bill very much in evidence as it moved about on the further side of the loose-knit flock of rather phlegmatic dotterels. Only when it jumped into flight did I realise how vividly yellow were its legs which had been screened by the grass. As it headed for Ngapuke Creek, it repeated a clear ringing call which seemed to me louder than that of any other Terek Sandpiper I have heard.

It is only to be expected that northern shanks and sandpipers should be noisier in March and April than during the earlier months of their stay in the southern hemisphere. The timbre of the calls which this bird made seem to me to indicate a close relationship with other typical 'tringas' and to strengthen the case for not placing the Terek Sandpiper in a monotypic genus (*Xenus*).



On the blowy and rather wet afternoon of 20/4/68, Professor J. E. Morton and John Jenkins accompanied me to Jordan's farm. About four o'clock after the ebb set in hundreds of waders — nine species were identified — were scattered over the comparatively sheltered shallows of Ngapuke Creek. Many were already busily feeding; others were breaking away from their roosting flocks. A Longbilled Curlew (*N. madagascariensis*) was conspicuous near a group of S.I. Oystercatchers (*H. o. finschi*). The Terek Sandpiper was found rather apart, darting this way and that in an eager search for food, its nearest neighbours being two Red-breasted Dotterels.

Some 200 miles to the south, Dr. Ian Andrew has supplied details of two Terek Sandpipers which frequented the Manawatu estuary during the summer. One was first seen on 12/11/67; and was still on its own on 23/12/67; but by 18/2/68 it had been joined by another and the two were still present on 16-17/3/68.

— R. B. SIBSON



#### SIGHTING OF SOUTH ISLAND BUSH WREN

When ascending the west side of Moss Pass, a 6000 ft. pass connecting the Sabine and D'Urville Valleys in the Nelson Lakes National Park, on 17/1/68, I was surprised to see two wren-like birds alight on a rock some ten yards ahead. This was at an altitude of approximately 5500 ft., at a spot where the low beech forest gives way to scrub and tussock, with boulders and large slabs of rock, marked by a large direction arrow of stones laid on the rock. At once I saw that they were not Rock Wrens (*Xenicus gilviventris*) with which I am familiar, on account of their slightly heavier build, longer legs and toes, and more sedate movements, not the restless zig-zag hopping of the Rock Wren. A companion having joined me, and the two birds remaining on the rock for about two minutes, we made careful notes of the plumage and soft parts, which are given below in some detail, as there appear to be some important variations from descriptions of the Bush Wren (*X. longipes*) given in the literature. Crown, brownish grey, merging into green on the back; a pale buff streak above the eye, and under the eye, and also above, a broad rich brown patch; at the carpal flexure, a yellow streak bordering a deep brown patch which merged into olive-brown wing quills; darker secondaries without spots; back green; tail darker green, short; breast plain brownish grey; bill black, straight; eye dark; legs and toes long, slaty-black. Conditions at the time were light rain and mist, and generally gloomy; but we both agreed on all the above details, and in particular on the pale buff eye-stripe, given as white in the literature, and on the slaty-black legs and feet, whereas Oliver (N.Z. Birds 1955) describes the toes as pale brown, and Buller (A History of N.Z. Birds 1888) gives the legs and feet as pale brown. Both birds were identical in plumage, being apparently two males; and on flying away gave a call which I would describe as a rapid succession of merging 'cheeps,' rather like the whirring call of the Rock Wren.

— R. A. CRESWELL

[Since his return, R.A.C. has examined skins in the Dominion Museum and discussed his observations with Mr. F. C. Kinsky. The accuracy of his identification of a very rare bird does not appear to be in doubt. — Ed.]