

SPINE-TAILED SWIFT IN SOUTHLAND

On 27/4/68 I was at West Peak in the Hokonui Hills with a group of boys who were training for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. We were on the tussock tops at an altitude of 1750 feet, when our attention was drawn to a dark streamlined bird with long pointed narrow wings swept back and with a quick darting action, not tumbling but twisting and appearing "off balance" at times. It was roughly tui-sized, but altogether different in shape and flight. After flying over the hilltop it went away, then returned and circled as if interested in us. It then flew below us so that both upper and under surfaces were seen. The upper surface was very dark, almost black; the under surface was grey-brown with a pale band about two inches wide on the underside of the rump. The under-chin was also light-coloured. On consulting reference books I was able to rule out Fork-tailed Swift, and confirmed my impression that the bird we had watched was a Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*).

— PHIL DORIZAC

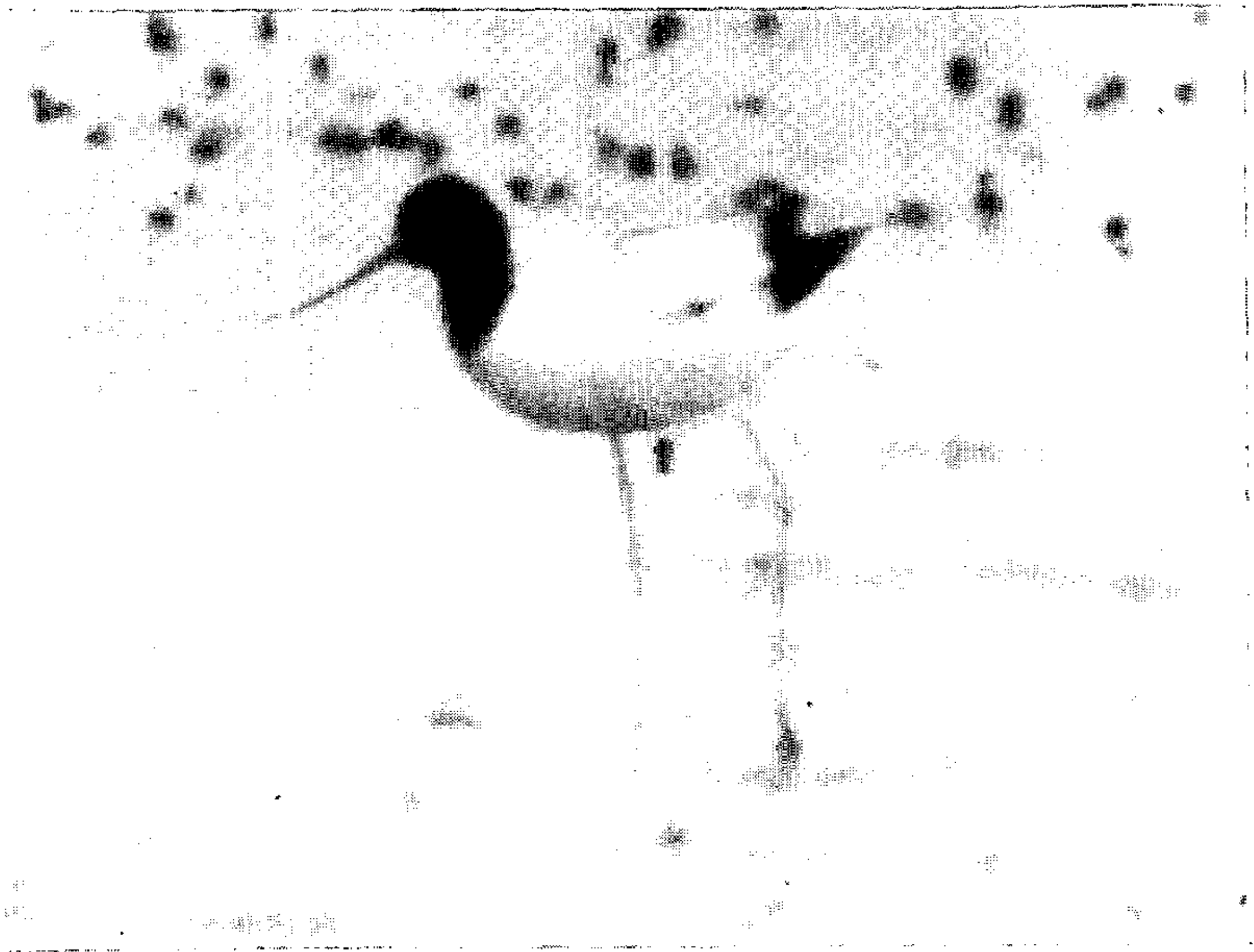


Plate XLIII (a) — Red-headed Avocet at Westport.

As mentioned on p. 123, the first Red-necked Avocet to be recorded in New Zealand for more than half a century, was found near Westport in February, 1968. It remained for some months and was photographed by Peter Grant on April 7th.