

throughout the Polynesian dialects and in Samoan the 'h' has been fully replaced by 's' or 'f.' The Tokelauans also aspirate the 'h' and thus 'vahavaha' would sound like 'vasavasa.' Almost certainly then, the unidentified bird would be the American Wandering Tattler, which I observed as a common migrant on Atafu atoll, Tokelau Islands.

— DAVID J. GRAVATT,
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The Editor,
Sir,

In the last two issues of this Journal there have been published two interesting and informative papers on the birdlife of some of the Pacific Islands, in which we in New Zealand should be taking a more vital interest. The keenness of the observers is to be commended; but one can only view with dismay the amount of collecting which has taken place, particularly of such rather rare species in the Pacific as the Bristle-thighed Curlew and the Sanderling, and of some of the pigeons, etc. One cannot but question the necessity for all this collecting, and the value of the information to be gathered from it, which would seem to be limited to the state of development of the gonads and of the moult. Surely such collecting smacks of the nineteenth century, and not of the conservation minded 1960's.

— A. BLACKBURN



LABOUR DAY WEEK-END, 1967 **At Glenavy, South Canterbury**

The South Island Labour Day Week-end, October 21 - 23, 1967, was based at the Glentaki Motor Camp at the Waitaki River Bridge. The site was well chosen for study of the local birds. The party settled into cabins and camps on the Friday evening. Ian and Joy McVinnie were the hosts and their programme was excellent. The days, regardless of weather, were spent in the field and interesting meetings held in the camp in the evenings.

A trip to the north side of the river mouth on the Saturday morning produced 1 White-faced Heron, 5 Little Shags, a resting flock of c. 1300 Spotted Shags, 2 Pied Stilts, Black-backed Gulls, 150 Black-billed and 3 Red-billed Gulls and 1 Caspian Tern. On a shingle bank at the outlet and on the other side was a colony of c. 5000 White-fronted Terns busy at nest building.

On the way to the south side in the afternoon a halt was made at the middle of the Waitaki Bridge to look down on a colony of c. 2000 Black-billed Gulls, with, as yet, only a few eggs. Six Red-billed Gulls were settled in the edge of the colony, one on a nest. On the other side of the bridge were 9 Black-fronted Terns. Nests of 2, 2, 1 and 1 were found.

At the south side of the mouth some of the party went to the tern colony, where no eggs were found. Many of the birds had a pink flush on their plumage. Others, led by Ian McVinnie, who had been studying the Banded Dotterel there and banding chicks, were shown late nests and chicks on the steep inner side of the high shingle bank, a new thing for most. Fewer nests were found

on the very inviting flat. Other birds were Canada Goose, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Wrybill and Turnstone, in very small numbers.

The Sunday brought a fierce gale with lashing rain, but the party set out for Edwin Sheat's, near Palmerston, to see ledge-nesting Spotted Shags, all along a single cliff-face ledge of rock. On the way stops were made to look at the birds of small lagoons and c. 580 Spotted Shag with c. 150 Black-backed Gull feeding on a shoal of fish close to the shore. A Giant Petrel sailed close by. The journey on foot to the shags was successful, at the cost of being soaked. All were invited into the house and Edwin Sheat and his wife and family dried the bedraggled party and fed them royally. Some went out in the rain to look at nests of Blue Penguin and Sooty Shearwater at the cliffs on the farm.

Lake Ki-Wainono was the goal for the Monday, a fine day. The 'bag' was pleasantly varied, including many Little Shag, Black Swan, Mallard and Shoveler, 12 Banded Dotterels, a few Pied Stilts, a Black-backed Gull colony of 23 nests, 5 Caspian and 12 White-fronted Terns, 2 Canada Geese, 4 Wrybills, 4 Godwits and one each of White-faced Heron, Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Stint, Southern Skua and Little Tern.

The very keen and happy party dispersed on the Monday afternoon, very thankful to the McVinnies for all they had done to achieve such success and to the Sheats for their liberal hospitality.

— H.R.McK.

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NOTICES

HORUHURU GANNETS — Disaster or Very Late Season ?

Landing on Horuhuru, 9/11/68, the Steins expected to find fifteen to sixteen hundred occupied nests — instead they found three hundred. The occupied nests were wide apart, spaced irregularly. Between them were traces of a thousand or more nesting sites of which many seemed to have had recent use of considerable duration. No sign of egg or chick remained however, but several hundred adults were floating on the waves, half-a-mile to the north-west.

We had expected to see chicks up to seven weeks of age. Instead we found very few much over a fortnight. This means that every chick that had hatched before 1st October had subsequently perished. There were a few eggs that had been laid in the last day or so, and these were in old nests. Some years ago we established that if a pair had lost their first chick, they were sometimes able to lay again, after the lapse of four to five weeks.

Whatever the cause, and however the Gannets now act, it seems likely that this season will hold the record for chick mortality. The bad weather we have experienced over the last few weeks must have made family life very difficult for the Gannets. We would like to know how widespread the effects have been and would be very pleased if those who visit other gannetries would write to the editor.

At Kaikoura during the 1968-69 breeding season approximately 500 breeding pairs of Red-billed Gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus*) have been individually colour-banded.