

GLOSSY IBIS IN CENTRAL OTAGO

A few miles southeast of Ranfurly, just above the confluence of the Taieri and Kyeburn Rivers, the maps show "Taieri Lake." This is not actually a lake but an area of low-lying pasture enclosed by a low hillside and a wide bend of the Taieri River, which becomes waterlogged and ponded when the river floods, which it invariably does every winter and periodically during the spring; in autumn it is often dry and on at least one occasion was sown out in turnips.

During the course of a visit to the Kakanui Range we camped overnight at this place and early on the morning of 17/12/68 made a quick survey of the birdlife. Among the hundreds of Pied Stilt, assorted ducks and other aquatic birds, we were agreeably surprised to record three Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*). Two stayed close together on the far side of a wet area about 100 yards off while the third was approached to within about 30 yards on the near side. It was a perfectly clear morning (6.30 a.m.) and good views were had with the glasses. (Mr. J. A. Stringer, who farms the area, said there were 'about eight or nine' of these birds and that they had been here 'about a fortnight'; in the time available we searched most of the nearby wet area but could find no others; however, they could have been over at the river or at another marshy area a mile or so west.)

The birds were feeding in the weedy shallows and at one time took to wing with a flock of stilts, returning to the same spot. No calls were heard. The lone bird seemed a fraction smaller than the other two. In size they were comparable to a White-faced Heron, perhaps shorter in the neck and rather heavier in the body; the wing-beat slightly faster than the heron's and less 'floppy.' Head, neck, upper breast and back were a rich rusty colour, while the dorsal wings, rump and tail showed dark bronzy with purplish reflections, very iridescent in the early morning sunlight. The bill appeared 4 to 5 inches in length, typically ibis-shaped, and both bill and legs appeared charcoal grey.

I believe this to be the first recorded sighting of the Glossy Ibis in Central Otago.

— PETER CHILD

[Taieri Lake, an extensive green oasis in a rather dry land, was briefly visited on 17/1/69 by Dr. Bob Smith, Mr. F. C. Kinsky, Richard Gray and the editor. A flock of ten Glossy Ibises was quickly located feeding and resting in shallows not far from the railway line. — Ed.]



RAIL IN EEL

On 2/6/68 a very large eel, six feet long, was caught by Mr. J. Harper in a farm pond at Kohekohe on the Awhitu Peninsula. When the eel was opened up the remains of a Spotless Crake (*P. tabuensis*) were found in its stomach. Mr. E. G. Turbott assisted in the identification.

— H. R. MCKENZIE