Measurements, except of uncommon birds, are best restricted to fairly fresh specimens. If weights are taken, birds must be fresh, intact, dry and well-shaken to free sand.

When completed, cards are sent to the organiser — M. J. Imber (63 Glen Road, Raumati South, Wellington) — who supplies cards and further information. The scheme is open to all members of O.S.N.Z.

The following references are to reports on the scheme:—

BULL, P. C., and B. W. BOESON, 1961a: Preliminary analysis of records of "storm-killed" seabirds from New Zealand, 1939-59. Notornis 9, 6: 185-199.

BULL, P. C., and B. W. BOESON, 1961b: Seabirds found dead in New Zealand in 1960. Notornis 9, 7: 225-230.

BULL, P. C., and B. W. BOESON, 1963: Seabirds found dead in New Zealand in 1961. Notornis 10, 6: 265-277.

BOESON, B. W., 1964: Seabirds found dead in New Zealand in 1962. Notornis 10, 8: 404-411.

BOESON, B. W., 1965: Seabirds found dead in New Zealand in 1963. Notornis 12, 3: 169-175.

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SHORT NOTES

HOOK GRASS KILLS SILVEREYES

While hiking in Westland, near Fox Glacier on 7/2/65, I came across a small stream where a number of Silvereyes *(Zosterops lateralis)* were drinking and bathing. As I approached they dispersed into the canopy, but to my disbelief, two remained, held fast by the seed heads of the sedge *Uncinia uncinata* (Family Cyperaceae). This sedge, better known as Hook Grass or Bastard Grass on account of its tenacious habit of latching on to anything which brushes against it, was growing on the bank of the stream and was apparently being used by the Silvereyes to reach the water.

While attempting to free the two trapped birds, I noticed another three dead in the shallow water still securely held by a number of the hooked seeds. Mortality of this type does not appear to be a common occurrence even though birds are well known pollinators and distributors of seeds and other living material. (Ridley, N.H. (1930); The Dispersal of Plants Throughout the World, Ashford Kent.) One other occurrence has come to my attention where Silvereyes and House Sparrows *(Passer domesticus)* were reported captured by secretions of *Pisonia brunonniana,* also in New Zealand. (Melville, R. (1964). Pollinators and Distributors: Seed Dispersal, A New Dictionary of Birds, p. 654. Edited by A. Landsborough Thompson).

The tenacity of Hook Grass is well known and cursed by many, but its ability to hold small birds, occasionally to their death, seems worthy of documentation. People studying small birds should be on the lookout for similar instances of mortality as well as feathers being contaminated with seeds of this and other species.

Uncinia uncinata is one species of a genus thought to have originated in the Antarctic (Ridley, p. 557) and to have been carried northwards from Tierra Del Fuego into North America and eventually Europe by migrant birds. A related species, *U. microglochin,* owes its dispersion over the north temperate regions to wild cattle and other herbivores (Ridley, p. 558). Owing to the unique hooked rachis of some species of this genus, particularly *U. uncinata,* its ability to "hitch a ride" has been greatly enhanced, even to the point where it has been able to hold small birds until they perish.

Because *U. uncinata* is able to hold on so firmly, preening and grooming must be important mechanisms for dissassociation of this species from its carrier.

In the case of the Silvereyes, it was still early in the growing season and the seed heads were still green and not yet mature. I am not familiar enough with *U. uncinata* to say, but I suspect seed separation from the parent plant is easier at maturity. This period of ripening accurs about the same time as the annual autumn migration in the southern hemisphere at which time small passerines coming in contact with seeds of *U. uncinata* and related species would experience less difficulty in getting away, thus enabling possible dispersal of the sedge over great distances.

— WILLIAM MERILEES

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IMMATURE ROOK AT KAIKOURA

Early in December while observing a flock of White-backed Magpies feeding in a sheep pasture on the Kaikoura peninsula, I noticed amongst them a bird of similar size but with no white markings.

On close examination it became evident that this 'stranger' was an immature Rook *(Corvus frugilegus)*. Its call, 'kaah,' is very distinctive.

It is now over four months since I first noticed its presence here and it still accompanies the same flock of Magpies; both while feeding and while roosting in a small pine plantation.

On 8/12/68, three Red-billed Gulls chased the Rook while it was in flight near the pine plantation. The Rook hurriedly disappeared into the plantation. The gulls immediately broke off the attack.

During late November 1968, Kaikoura experienced strong N.W. winds over a period of several days. Could this perhaps be the reason for its presence here ?

— MICHAEL J. CRIGLINGTON

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REVIEWS

Poisoning Gulls with Alpha-chloralose near a New Zealand Airfield. T. A. Caithness 1968. Jnl. Wildlife Management 32, 2: 279-286.

The airfield at Napier was close to a rubbish dump which attracted Black-backed Gulls and adjacent to a nesting colony of some 1250 pairs: airstrikes being numerous. Extermination was decided on and careful study and preparation was necessary. 422,000 squares of bread were airdropped as pre-baits at the peak of incubation (November 18-24, 1965) and 19,000 poisoned baits were used on the 5th and 7th days (no bait-shyness having developed). When the baits were taken, narcosis showed within ten minutes and apart from some body-twitching the evidence suggested little discomfort to the birds, many dying on their nests in a natural sleeping position. Some birds flew strongly even when narcotized and may have died at sea, but 2,131 were known to have been killed, virtually exterminating the colony. Few other species were poisoned accidentally.

— J.M.C.