

## TAKAHE FOUND IN STILLWATER RIVER CATCHMENT

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During the period 27/3/69 to 4/4/69 I accompanied a party of three deerstalkers that established a base camp on the true left bank of the Stillwater River, approximately 1 km upstream from the point where Waterfall Creek enters the main river. The camp was located in a 50 m wide wooded strip situated between a swampy clearing of 1.5 ha (3.7 acres) and the river.



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At 7.00 a.m. on 30/3/69 a Takahe *Notornis mantelli* approached the camp and walked to within 3 m of our tents. It was a full-grown bird, to judge by size and plumage, and exhibited no fear at our slow movements. The bird remained in the immediate vicinity for about 15 minutes, ample time for numerous photographs.

What was assumed to be the same bird was seen on four separate occasions during the next four days. Normally the bird appeared early or late in the day, but was sighted once at mid-day. It approached and departed from the downstream direction, both within the wooded area and through the swampy clearing. On three occasions, when Wekas *Gallirallus australis* in the surrounding area began a chorus of calling, the Takahe immediately joined in with its similar, but much deeper and more powerful call. Wekas, usually constant companions around such camps, were absent from ours. One Weka, occasionally seen on the upstream side of the camp, never approached closer than 40 m.

Although three of our party were familiar with Takahe droppings, methods of clipping the vegetation and other sign, no evidence of the bird's existence was found during the five-days period we were aware of its existence. This encounter was approximately 12 km from the closed *Notornis* area, and numerous other sightings of Takahe sign have been reported recently from catchments located around the periphery of the closed area. I suspect visual confirmation of these reports will come as these areas are increasingly frequented by man.



## SHORT NOTE

### UNUSUAL FEEDING STATION OF TUI

During December 1957 while on holiday at Mahitahi, South Westland, I was able to observe the behaviour of a Tui as it fed from white clover flowers in a well grazed paddock. My attention was first drawn by a large black bird which was walking in a very awkward fashion on the ground. The bird was clearly a Tui, being only 100 feet away. It appeared most ungainly and had considerable difficulty in maintaining an upright stance, rocking forwards on to its beak and then backwards on to its tail, all the time feeding on the white clover flowers. It would feed within a radius of about 8 feet for about 2 minutes and then fly off into a patch of second growth, possibly to feed nestlings. The bird would reappear in half an hour and then repeat the performance. This Tui fed regularly on the ground over a period of about five days and then discontinued this unusual trait. Although I have occasionally observed Bellbirds on the ground extracting nectar from flowers, they appear to have far less difficulty in maintaining their balance than this Tui had.

— S. C. SPARROW