

## SUSPECTED CASE OF BIRD POX IN A SMALL POPULATION OF NEW ZEALAND PIPITS

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The New Zealand Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* is one of the most common native birds to be found on the flat pumice land at the base of the Matahina Hydro-Electric Dam at Te Mahoe. There is a resident population of between six and twelve birds.

On 27/12/69 a pipit which was feeding around the outside of the station was noticed to have tumours about 6 m.m. in diameter on both sides of the loreal region of the head, the colour of which was a yellow tan. The bird seemed to suffer some discomfort, scratching at that area and cocking its head. The bird remained in the area for several weeks during which time the tumours gradually changed to a greyish brown, with no visible effect on the general activities of the bird.

On 28/1/70 another bird was noticed with a tumour about 9 m.m. in diameter on the under side of the left tarsus. There were no other sightings until 23/2/70, when one bird was noticed to have a lame right leg with signs of a swelling at the lower end of the tibia. This bird was very excited and five days later was seen with a fledgling chick.

On 11/2/71 one bird was seen with a tumour on the top left outer toe and another tumour under the hind toe of the same foot. This bird was suffering a certain amount of discomfort, resting every few minutes.

On 18/3/71 another bird was seen with a tumour about 9 m.m. in diameter on the left loreal region. By 19/3/71 it had increased to 13 m.m. diameter. The bird being active and alert but seemed to have restricted vision. On 22/3/71 the tumour had shrunk to about 6 m.m. diameter and was hanging slack with the colour now a dark brown.

On 24/3/71 in a flock of 8 pipits, two had tumours, the bird mentioned above and another with a very large tumour over 13 m.m. in diameter protruding from the left lores.

On 24/4/71 a scruffy, thin, but active bird was seen with a tumour at the base of the left middle toe. No feathers on the left side of the head and neck; the colour of the tumour was a blacky brown; this bird appeared to be blind in the left eye, and was slightly disturbed and feinted to the left, but flew strongly when flushed. This could be the bird mentioned on 18/3/71. Also in company with the above bird was one with a tumour on the left oral region 9 m.m. in diameter, dark in colour and with the feathers falling out in this area. There was another tumour on the outer side of the left tarsus, this bird was active but holding the affected leg up against the body.

Not being conversant with diseases in birds, I contacted Mr. R. Weston, of Kawerau, who thought there was a strong possibility that this was bird pox. He referred me to a paper by K. Westerskov and this seems to confirm the fact that it could be bird pox.

### REFERENCE

WESTERSKOV, KAJ, 1953: Bird Pox in a New Zealand Pipit. *Notornis* 5 (5).