

BLACK-BILLED GULL COLONY AT WAIROA

While on a regular check of birds at Whakamahi Lagoon on 28 October 1972, I saw a group of terns and gulls on the shingle bar which separates the lagoon from the sea. The bar is permanent, composed of fine shingle and well covered with driftwood. It is about 200 metres across. The birds were gathered on the inland slope towards the lagoon.

The group comprised about 300 White-fronted Terns (*Sterna striata*) and 98 Black-billed Gulls (*Larus bulleri*). The terns had begun breeding, using an area clear of driftwood. The Black-billed Gulls were in small scattered groups, each group centred on areas on the perimeter of the tern colony where driftwood had gathered in small heaps. Building of nests by the gulls was under way although none were near completion.

By 9 November, a few nests of the Black-billed Gulls contained eggs and on 15 November 45 nests were occupied by sitting birds. About 150 gulls were present either at the colony or on the nearby Whakamahi Lagoon.

On 18 November, the colony was deserted, except for numerous Black-backed Gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) which were feeding on the remaining eggs. A number of dead Black-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns which had been shot with air rifle pellets lay about the colony.

The Black-billed Gulls spread throughout the coastal area from Wairoa to Mahia Peninsula within the next few days and have remained throughout the summer. Neither the gulls nor the terns appear to have made any further attempts to breed this season.

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AUSTRALIAN LITTLE GREBE ON LAKE OKAREKA

On 31 January 1973, a differently coloured dabchick was observed feeding about 16-20 yards from the shore at Lake Okareka.

The bird was obviously undisturbed by our presence, and allowed ample opportunity for observation.

Description: Crown, hind neck and cheek black or green-black; throat dark; bill black with a white tip; eye white or pale yellow. Chest sides and back streaky grey and black; flanks medium brown; undersides and tail (from behind) pale grey to white; an elongated yellow spot stretching at an angle from the base of the bill to just below the eye and a dark red stripe from behind the eye to about halfway down the neck. Size appeared to be a little less than that of our native dabchick *Podiceps rufopectus*. In poor light the red stripes on the head seemed darker and the back a more uniform dark grey.