

## SHORT NOTES

### PIED AND BLACK FANTAILS IN AUCKLAND

John L. Craig, in his article on polymorphism in the Fantail (Craig 1972), recorded counts of pied and black morphs of the North Island Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*), and John and Mary McFadzien later gave an additional count (McFadzien & McFadzien 1972). In total only three blacks were noted in approximately 1100 piers in the North Island. A few isolated records of the black form have been listed by A. T. Edgar (1972 *a* & *b*) in "Classified Summarised Notes."

I make two regular bird censuses, and details of fantails for the five years 1968 to 1972 are as follows.

1. My garden in Te Atatu, Auckland. The maximum number seen in each week is recorded, i.e. single birds on several days would only count as one for the week, whereas three in the garden at one time would count as three. All birds observed have been piers, no blacks have been seen.

	No. of Weeks	No. of Birds Present				No. of Weeks Present
		0	1	2	3	
1968	52	42	7	3		10
1969	52	52				0
1970	52	42	8	1	1	10
1971	51	47	4			4
1972	52	43	7	2		9
	259	226	26	6	1	33

2. Old disused market garden, Avondale, Auckland, 4.6 km from my garden. Here a 30 min walk is made most weeks and the total number of birds noted.

	No. of Visits	No. of Birds Present					No. of Times Present
		0	1	2	3	4	5
1968	43	22	8	6	7		21
1969	48	32	12	2	2		16
1970	48	27	15	4	2		21
1971	46	34	7	3	2		12
1972	44	17	11	9	4	1	2
	229	132	53	24	17	1	2
							97

On one occasion, on 10 April 1972, a black morph was present, but otherwise only pied birds have been seen.

The total number of individuals is unknown, as no doubt most of the birds are resident and seen repeatedly, but the figures are sufficient to show that in the Auckland area the black form is as described in the Annotated Checklist, "rare."

The results also perhaps indicate that there may have been fewer fantails in the area in 1969 and 1971 than in the other three years.

## LITERATURE CITED

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NEST HELPERS AT A WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW  
NEST

Between 2 and 22 December, 1972, I had a White-breasted Woodswallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) nest under daily observation. It was located in the fork of a branch high in a raintree (*Samanea saman*) in Gordon Street, Suva, Fiji, being well sheltered by the canopy, unlike those mentioned by Wood (1926: 131) which were exposed to the sun on the tops of pandanus trees. This raintree has been a favourite woodswallow roost for several years, it being usual to see up to half a dozen birds performing noisy aerobatics over the canopy as the evening darkens, or perched side by side on a branch, chattering loudly and preening each other. I have often seen woodswallows driving Fiji Goshawks (*Accipiter rufitorques*) and even a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) from its vicinity by particularly bold attacks. The falcon definitely kills adult woodswallows on occasion, while the goshawk almost certainly takes their young.

When first noticed the nest contained three small nestlings. One disappeared on 8 December, while a second was found crushed on the road beneath the tree on 20 December, having left the nest with its companion several days earlier, to roost on nearby branches. The surviving nestling fledged successfully and was regularly seen on powerlines in the vicinity, soliciting adults for food.

Mayr (1945: 97) stated that "both parents take part in rearing the young" but the situation at this White-breasted Woodswallow nest was more complex, four birds caring for the young during part of the nesting cycle.