

twice more before vanishing into the wooded gully below. The Kokako appeared indifferent to human presence, reacting only to the taped calls. The "chase" through the trees appeared to be part of the ritual, and was conducted with what we could best describe as "joie de vivre."

A thorough search of the ridges in the vicinity on three subsequent weekends failed to find any trace of nesting activity.

REFERENCE

BULLER, W. L. 1888. A history of the birds of New Zealand. 2nd ed. Vol. I. Pp. lxxxiv + 1-250, text illus., pls I-XXIV. London: Privately published.

T. G. LOVEGROVE

P.O. Box 56,
Waipu,
Northland

S. M. TOWLE

8 Arney Road,
Auckland, 5



A VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER FAMILY AT WAIKANAE

For several years a pair of *Haematopus unicolor* ("reischeki") has been resident at Waikanae Estuary and has attempted to breed. After the nesting season, the pair is sometimes joined by immigrants (including a banded bird from Wellington Harbour) and occasionally another pair remains in the spring. The "home pair" consists of a completely black male and a smudgy intermediate pied female, the sexes being inferred from positions during attempts at copulation (CAF, 21 July 1972) and consistent behaviour when incubating eggs (MLF, 13 January 1974) or accompanying chicks (CAF, 27 December 1971). We cannot prove that the "home pair" has been unaltered since 1971 but we have no evidence to suggest a change.

The "home pair" had two downy running chicks on 12 December 1971 which both survived to fly and were both pied (27 December 1971); probably they would be "pied intermediate" in Baker's classification (1973). The following season, the home pair, or a pair with the same plumages, produced two pied downy chicks (first seen 18 November, MLF), about 5 inches tall on November 26 (CAF), seen again on December 9 (MLF) but reduced to one survivor on December 16 and 28, when it was fully fledged. These chicks (and especially the survivor) were exceptionally pied individuals, only distinguished from *H. finschi* by their larger size and by the behaviour of the parent pair towards them. In particular they had white shoulder patches and white rumps extending forward between the scapulars as in *H. finschi*. Neither of us has ever seen such extremely pied specimens of *H. unicolor* "reischeki." In 1973-74 the home pair failed to produce young.

We record these broods because Baker (1973) had no record of Pied progeny from Black X Intermediate parentage.

REFERENCE

BAKER, A. J. 1973. Genetics of plumage variability in the Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*). *Notornis* 20 (4): 330-345, figs 1-3, tables 1-7.

C. A. FLEMING

42 Wadestown Road,
Wellington

M. L. FALCONER

188 Miro Road,
Normandale



INCUBATION OF AN ADELIE PENGUIN EGG BY A SOUTH POLAR SKUA

During the austral summer of 1972-73, I observed and photographed a pair of South Polar Skuas (*Catharacta maccormicki*) incubating the egg of an Adelie Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) at Hallett Station, Antarctica (72°19'S, 170°13'E). Both members of the pair incubated the egg from 6-14 January 1973, and both defended the nest and territory much as has been described for other members of their species (Young 1963). The nest resembled that of other South Polar Skuas (Spellerberg 1969), and was located about 20 m from the nearest penguin colony.

From all outward appearances the egg seemed to be normal, except for a small crack on one side, possibly indicating that at one time it had been frozen. It was of average size (71.7 x 56.5 mm) and only slightly soiled on the surface. The ambient temperature ranged from -8° to 0°C during the incubation period, but the egg was checked several times and was never found to be frozen.

An unincubated penguin egg was in the gravel about 3 m from the skuas' nest and remained there unharmed for the entire 9 days the other egg was being incubated. Several other penguin eggs were scattered about the rookery, but were usually eaten within a day unless frozen or on the interior of a penguin colony. On 15 January both the incubated egg and the egg near the nest were gone, and only one member of the pair was observed defending the territory.

How this incubated egg got in the nest was not determined, but since skuas normally carry penguin eggs between their mandibles, and since no military personnel were allowed on the rookery during 1973, it is assumed that the egg arrived there through normal behaviour and was subsequently incubated by these birds. Eklund (1961) has described examples of South Polar Skuas incubating Adelie Penguin eggs experimentally placed in their nests, but to my knowledge this is the first reported case of skuas voluntarily incubating a penguin egg. One possibility for this unusual behaviour is that these birds might have picked up the egg from the rookery while frozen, and