

A STRAY PIED TIT

A male Pied Tit (*Petroica macrocephala toitoi*) spent four days in January 1974 at the home of Mr and Mrs W. Morton a mile south of Clevedon on the Clevedon-Papakura Road (ref. NZMS 1, N42/540418). It was noted to be taking caterpillars in the vegetable garden. Mr Morton recognised it and secured photographs of it which proved its identity, this in open rich dairying farmland eight miles by map from the nearest known habitat of the species, the Moumoukai Bush in the Hunua Ranges. The country between consists of three miles of open farmland and then five miles of rough farmland with patches of poor bush and large areas of scrub, from which there have been no reports known to the writer over the last 52 years.

One was heard on 1 November 1950 by Mr R. H. D. Stidolph in Thorp's Bush (ref. NZMS 1, N42/550445) on the northern outskirts of Clevedon Village. This Scenic Reserve is good bush and a narrow strip of bush and scrub runs six miles north to the sea with farmland and a large pine plantation to the west of it and all open farmland on the east. This should be good habitat but one farmer has owned part of this strip for 52 years and another for 39 years and neither has ever found the species there, nor have I. The one of November 1950 must have been the last or one of the last of a small local population or, more likely, a stray like the present one.

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AUSTRALIAN TREE MARTINS NEAR TE ARAROA

On 25 April 1974 my wife and I observed a flock of birds, identified as this species, at the mouth of the Karakatuwhero River, about 7 km east of Hicks Bay (map ref. NZMS 18, sheet 6, N55-7463). With the assistance of binoculars, detailed notes on plumage and activity were made on the spot, and reference to the *Field Guide* indicated that the birds were Australian Tree Martins, *Hylochelidon nigricans*. Later reference to Oliver (1930), Leach (1912) and Buller (1888) confirmed the species. The distinguishing features of greyish-white rump, absence of deeply forked tail, and chestnut-brown forehead, the last more noticeable in some birds than others, were all noted in the field. The birds did not appear to be disturbed by the near presence of observers, and it is also noted that Tree Martins have previously been reported at Hicks Bay.

Under observation for about an hour on a mild sunny afternoon, these birds were actively hawking over a winding, shallow, shingly river with several small rapids, near the sea outlet. The area was largely coastal wasteland, with extensive lupin growth and a scattering of miscellaneous larger trees. Numbers were c. 30-35 but an accurate count was made difficult by the continuous dipping, diving, darting flight. Occasionally the Martins would flock together in groups of