three clutches were offspring of the same parents, a supposition which is strengthened by the consistency in their appearance and behaviour and their increasing tolerance of interested humans. After the third hatching the parent birds would feed the young without any sign of nervousness while two observers had tea in deck chairs at a distance of 4 - 5 m.

After its third use, the nest was still sound but it had become rather shallow and the grass lining was practically worn away from the mud-plaster walls.

JOHN & MARY McFADZIEN

6 Crosby Street,
Havelock North

★

SOUTHERN BLACK-BACKED GULL *(Larus dominicanus)* AT CAPE HALLETT, ANTARCTICA

The Southern Black-backed Gull *(Larus dominicanus)* has been reported at only four localities on the continent of Antarctica, excluding the Palmer Peninsula (Ingham 1962, *Emu* 62: 126-8; Watson *et al.* 1971, Birds of the Antarctic and Subantarctic, Am. Geogr. Soc., Antarct. Map Folio Ser.). Watson *et al.* summarised the locations of all known breeding colonies and sightings of this species. No observations of the Southern Black-backed Gull have been reported for Cape Hallett (72°19'S., 170°13'E.) or the coast of Victoria Land. The southern record for this species is Ross Island (77°S.) (Watson *et al.* 1971).

On 4 November 1971 at 2030 G.M.T., I observed an adult Southern Black-backed Gull in flight over the north beach of the Cape Hallett Adelie Penguin rookery. The bird flew the length (450 m) of the penguin colonies on the beach ridge at a height of about 20 m before leaving to the northeast and the frozen Ross Sea. The duration of the observation was about five minutes.

The nearest known breeding colony of Southern Black-backed Gulls is Macquarie Island (54°S.) (Watson *et al.* 1971), about 1000 nautical miles from Cape Hallett. Two explanations for the presence of this species at Cape Hallett are: (1) that the individual was blown off course by a storm, or (2) that it was searching for food in the penguin colonies. I noted complete cloud cover and high winds (12-25 knots) at Cape Hallett on the day of observation. However, the weather for the preceding week was calm and clear in the Cape Hallett area. Although Southern Black-backed Gulls consume some birds and bird eggs as a part of their normal diet (Fordham 1964), this individual showed little interest in the incubating Adelie Penguins *(Pygoscelis adeliae)*. There are no reports of Southern Black-backed Gulls utilizing Adelie Penguin rookeries as a source of food, although they do take eggs and chicks of other Sphenisciformes (Bagshawe 1938, *Trans. Zool Soc. Lond.* 24: 185-306). Sladen (1958, *Scient. Rep. Falkld. Isl. Depend. Surv.* 17) found Southern Black-backed Gulls nesting within one-half mile of Adelie and Gentoo Penguin *(Pygoscelis papua)*

rookeries with no predation occurring. It is possible that this bird was searching for littoral invertebrates and fish, although the littoral zone at Cape Hallett was completely ice-covered. I saw no other Southern Black-backed Gulls at Cape Hallett during three austral summer seasons (1969-1971).

This observation was made while, sponsored by National Science Foundation Antarctic Research Program Grants (numbers GA13827 and GA23744) awarded to John R. Baker of Iowa State University, I was studying Adelie Penguin incubation behaviour. I thank George Llano, Program Manager for Antarctic research and the U.S. Navy for weather data.

DIRK V. DERKSEN

Department of Zoology,
Iowa State University,
Ames, Iowa,
U.S.A. 50010

★

A WHITE HERON NORTH OF CHRISTCHURCH

I have been keeping a fairly consistent record for some time of the numbers of birds appearing on, or in the vicinity of, a new lagoon and area of swampland created as a result of the unusually wet winter of last year (1974). So far, thirteen different species have been observed. The location of this interesting lagoon is on the right hand side of the main north road from Christchurch, approximately 5 km from Saltwater Creek and 3 km from the Leithfield Beach turn-off. It is intersected by a rough causeway, one part being reed-fringed swampland and the other part a clear stretch of water.

On 19 February 1975, in the late afternoon, I was driving past the lagoon keeping a sharp look-out for birds, when my attention was drawn to a large white bird standing in the mud at the edge of the lagoon in the typical attitude of a heron, neck retracted. On closer investigation with the aid of binoculars, I identified the bird as a White Heron *(Egretta alba)*. Access to the causeway can be gained by entry through a farm gate and as I approached this, I noticed a White-faced Heron *(Ardea novaehollandiae)*, standing close to the White Heron; there appeared to be some interaction between the two. I was immediately impressed by the great size of the White Heron in relation to the White-faced but the latter flew off at my approach whereas the White Heron showed no sign of alarm apart from half flying out of the mud on to the causeway about 3 m ahead of me. I was in a superb position for photography and I took particular note of the yellow beak and long dark legs. I detected a slight tinge of buff colour on the breast of the bird but in retrospect this could have been discolouration caused by contact with slime as the heron waded in the water. As I moved still closer, the bird raised its wings into the wind and flew off, circling the swampy area once before alighting on the far bank.