

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).

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#### 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.

I resolved to take advantage of this rare opportunity to study the White Heron further so I returned to the lagoon the following afternoon. Although I made a careful search, there was no sign of the bird but I found a set of clearly defined footprints in the mud close to the place where I had originally sighted it.

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#### DO MIGRATORY FLOCKS OF GODWITS AND KNOTS BRING OTHER WADERS TO NEW ZEALAND ?

Shortly after reading the remarkable note "A pigeon among the shags" (Jenkins & Sibson 1975, *Notornis* 22: 76-77), I came across a discussion by Guy Mountford of other instances of birds being "caught up" in flocks of unrelated species (Mountford 1962, *Portrait of a River*. London: 86). The examples cited concern a Crane with Pelicans, Jackdaw with Lapwings, and Tawny Pipit with Pied Flycatchers, the latter being a flock on migration.

These several examples prompt me to formulate a question which recently came to mind while I was watching the very small numbers of certain waders on the Manukau Harbour, e.g. Golden Plover and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, in the presence of the vast flocks of Godwit and Knot: is it possible that the shore birds which come to New Zealand as stragglers, or even as regular visitors in small numbers, do so as a result of being caught up in the massive migratory flocks of Godwit and Knot? Admittedly the waders in question are themselves migratory species, but is New Zealand their right destination or have these individuals perhaps "caught the wrong flight"?

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#### BROWN BOOBY IN WELLINGTON HARBOUR

On 24 April 1975, a Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster plotus*) was sighted by Mr H. Secker perched on a rock 25 m off-shore between Ngauranga and Petone. I saw what was presumably the same bird on 11 May as it flew along the western end of Petone foreshore. The pale belly, uniformly dark plumage and gannet-like dives were observed before the bird and its escort of Black-backed Gulls moved away. For the next month the bird was frequently observed in this part of the harbour. Fortunately for photographers, an old pile some 30 m off-shore at high tide became a favourite perch (Fig. 1). This also provided an opportunity for such diagnostic features as the sharp line of demarcation on the breast and the bluish colour of the bill to be observed (Stein 1955, *Notornis* 6: 157-9).

Mr J. L. Kendrick sighted the bird as far east in the harbour as Mahina Bay on 30 May. The bird returned to Petone foreshore