

## SHORT NOTES

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### FURTHER SIGHTINGS OF NANKEEN KESTRELS IN HAWKE'S BAY

I recently wrote some short notes (*Notornis* 22: 175-176, June 1975) about my sighting of a Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) at Bridge Pa Golfcourse on 25 April and subsequent sightings of a kestrel by other reliable observers near Napier Airport over a period of weeks. I suggested, that due to evidence available at the time, that one bird was responsible for these sightings. However, it seems that more than one bird is present in the Napier-Hastings area — at least two and very probably three.

On 12 June, I was informed by some friends that they had sighted a bird they felt to be a kestrel, flying around the quarry where they worked. They had first seen it two days before, and on the following day I saw this bird myself and confirmed that it was a Nankeen Kestrel. I have had many sightings of this same bird since as it has established a territory with the quarry cliff as its roost. It may be observed any morning sunning itself at its perch which is usually about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  up the quarry face. This face would be about 20-30 m high and has numerous small ledges and holes on it. It stays for about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour to 1 hour then flies away. Sometimes it is seen during the middle of the day as it flies about (it frequently attacks passing harriers) but always returns to roost between 4.30 p.m. and 5 p.m. Often there is heavy quarry machinery in operation when it returns to roost, but does not seem to be at all disturbed by the noise and movement. I have spent some hours observing this kestrel through 10 x 50 field glasses and am fairly certain it is an adult female because of its head and tail markings and colour. It seems quite probable that this kestrel is the one I first sighted at Bridge Pa because the quarry is quite close and would be visible to any kestrel flying nearby. It would no doubt present a strong attraction as a secure, sheltered place to roost.

On 19 June about 12.15 p.m. I was observing the "resident" kestrel whilst having my lunch. It had been sitting on a fence post at the very top of the quarry face for about 20 minutes occasionally preening. It then flew off and disappeared behind the cliff. A couple of minutes later, it reappeared briefly, chasing what seemed to be another kestrel. Hoping they would appear again, I was ready with my glasses when they did. I was able to confirm from this second longer sighting that the other bird was another kestrel, and, because it had lighter head and tail markings and was slightly smaller, I feel it could possibly be a male. Unfortunately, this second bird has not

been seen since and was probably driven off its territory by the female. However, presuming they are opposite sexes, there might be a possibility of them nesting on the quarry face.

The kestrel that was sighted at Napier is still being seen fairly regularly by reliable observers. It is rather unlikely that it is the second bird seen by me at the quarry since the distance between the two areas is about 29 km. One rather interesting fact remains to intrigue me: one of the men who first sighted the "quarry" kestrel maintains he saw three of them one day flying near a small flock of Rooks. Having seen two myself in this area, I have no reason to disbelieve this perhaps rather extravagant statement.

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#### YELLOW-NOSED MOLLYMAWK (*Diomedea chlororhynchus*) RECORDED IN THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

The Sisters Islands (43° 35'S, 176° 50'W) represent the northern outliers of the Chatham Island group, some 800 kilometres east of New Zealand. Between October 1973 and January 1975 about 14 weeks were spent on the Middle Sister as part of an intensive study of the status and breeding biology of the *Diomedea* species at their most northerly breeding locality in the New Zealand region.

Soon after our arrival on 21 January 1975 a strange Mollymawk was observed and photographed at 1030 hrs moving among nesting Northern Royal Albatross (*Diomedea epomophora sanfordi*) on the western side of the island. When compared with Bullers Mollymawk (*Diomedea bulleri*) which also breeds on the island a number of differences were immediately evident. These were its small size, single yellow bill stripe, cherry-pink tip to the bill, dark triangular eye patch, and light grey nape and back of head. The underwing was largely white with the narrow black margin wider on the anterior edge (Fig. 1).

Though remaining on land for only a few minutes it was easily identified as a Yellow-nosed Mollymawk (*Diomedea chlororhynchus*) in adult plumage. Apart from its plumage characteristics, the mode of walking with a forward horizontal movement of the head was unlike any other mollymawk in the New Zealand area (Fig. 2).