A BUSHMAN'S SEVENTEEN YEARS OF NOTING BIRDS

PART C — NORTH ISLAND RIFLEMAN, WHITEHEAD PIED TIT AND NORTH ISLAND ROBIN

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(Edited by H. R. McKenzie)

NORTH ISLAND RIFLEMAN *(Acanthisitta chloris granti)*

STATUS AND HABITS

Habitat

The North Island Rifleman prefers beech forest up to more than 1300 m (4000 feet). It is also to be expected in any type of heavy bush, and, at times, in heavy scrub or high tea-tree. Stidolph (1971: 100) gave instances of its being found in the Wairarapa area in very small patches of light bush which are separated from its usual habitat by miles of open grasslands. Rarely has it been reported in quite open country. H. W. Axbey (pers. comm.), when stationed at Queenstown, saw, during a very severe drought, Riflemen about half a mile away from the bush working their way along old fence posts and feeding on spiders. Other bird species had also been forced into the open by the extreme dryness of the bush.

Flight

The flight is so weak that it cannot fly upwards to any extent, nor does it make level flight from tree to tree. Its usual habit is to work up the trunk of one tree, then fly down from the branches to the base of another and climb up again. Both while climbing and when on the ground it flaps its wings convulsively and continuously as if to assist its balance.

Nesting

The nest may be found in a cavity in a dead or living tree, a stump, a prostrate log or a bank. The entrance is sometimes so small that the bird has to squeeze through it sideways. This must help it to escape some predators. The nest itself is rather bulky and is something like that of the Grey Warbler. It may be just a cup when there is no room for a dome. Because of its internal siting it is seldom visible from the outside. The site is usually at low levels but occasionally it may be found in quite high positions.

With rough weather coming on I have twice seen a Rifleman go into a hole in a beech tree to sleep at night, one on an exposed ridge and one in more solid bush.

Food

It seems that this busy little bird is never still. It industriously seeks food in the bark of tree trunks and among the branches. Where old timber is lying on the ground it will explore it, even to the extent of going quite a distance through a hollow log or root and coming out at the other end. It must suffer casualties from vermin when feeding very low down. In ordinary feeding it takes small life of various kinds, with larvae and eggs, though parents are often seen taking quite long-legged insects to the young. In my experience it is almost entirely an insectivorous feeder.

Song

The song, or perhaps it should be styled its call, is so weak and high pitched that it can be heard only at very close quarters. It is sometimes described as " zee-zee." I liken it to the winding of a watch, a " pit-pit." Stidolph (1971: 102) described the call of a nesting pair as " ticking."

Washing

Little pockets of water on the tops of tree-fern leaves are used. It seldom washes after 1300 hours, but one washed as late as 1500, fluttered its wings and went into a three inch hole in a big tree.

ANALYSIS OF MONTHLY CHARTS

(Brackets = total birds seen plus estimate of birds heard only).
Proportion seen to heard: 10 seen to 1 heard and not seen.

TIHOI

The total of birds seen from May 1944 to April 1946 was 1304 (1434).

Count days per month for 24 months averaged 21.6; days seen 10.7; days not seen 10.9.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 18.

Count days totalled 519 and the total birds seen 1304, giving an average of 2.5 (2.75) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

Tihoi averaged 101 per month for the 11 months spent there and Arataki 15 for 13 months. I can give no definite explanation for the difference as the bush and conditions were similar.

MINGINUI

The total of birds seen from part 1946 to part 1961 was 642 (706).

Count days per month for 170 months averaged 20.5; days seen 1.4; days not seen 19.1.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 16.

Count days totalled 3487 and the total birds seen 642, giving an average of 0.18 (0.2) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

1946. From May, when I went to Minginui, to November the average per count day of birds seen was 1. December had 0.

1947. From January to June the average was 2.1, then July to December 0.2.

1948. From January to April the average was 1.4. I was away from May to September inclusive. October and November had none. December had 2.5.

1949 had 0.1 and 1950 dropped to 0.025. Then came a complete blank for 122 months, from 1951 to 1961.

It is to be noted that the Rifleman, in the few years that it was present, was in larger numbers from January to April, then faded, whereas the other birds in Part C, Whitehead, Pied Tit and North Island Robin, kept fairly even numbers throughout each year.

The figures given above for Tihoi and Arataki could perhaps indicate a progressive decline which may eventually have reached the same result as at Minginui.

WAIAU

The total of birds seen on hunting trips for parts of 47 months (from 1 to 24 days per month) was 1783 (1961).

Count days per month averaged 5, days seen 5.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 70.

Count days totalled 234 and the total birds seen 1783, giving an average of 7.6 (8.36) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

April was the best month, with figures on long trips up to 382 but it dropped by 1954 and then faded right out. This was largely the favoured beech country so it is very difficult to account for it. My weather charts do not seem to indicate anything unusual. A local freak storm in the back country could possibly partly account for it, but not wholly. In 1956 G. E. Sopp and H. R. McKenzie (pers. comm.) reported a snowstorm in the Aniwaniwa Valley, Lake Waikaremoana, which almost wiped out the Rifleman. However, it recovered there but in the Waiau there were none seen at all from 1954 to 1961. Some factor other than the weather must have been responsible, or mostly responsible, both in Minginui and Waiau. Timber-getting at Tihoi and Minginui must, of course, have had a serious effect on the population but this did not obtain in the beech forest of the Waiau where the fade-out occurred four years later than at Minginui.

The above is the story up to April 1961 for Minginui and Waiau. Inquiry has been made to ascertain the position of the Rifleman at the beginning of 1976 and also for earlier years. R. T. Collins, Chief Forestry Ranger, Minginui (pers. comm.), stated that he has been resident in the area since 1962 and can recall observations of Riflemen as far back as 1967 or 1968. All the sightings since then

have been in the Upper Whirinaki watershed, part of what is described in the text as Waiau. Three of his staff who have been with him for nine years have been consulted. All agree with him that sightings are infrequent but regular and that the numbers seem to be low. Most of his work has been in this area but he also works the large area eastward to the Huiarau divide wherein it has not been noted. Though the Rifleman has not been seen in that area it is not claimed that it is absent. He stresses the fact that he and his staff are not dedicated students of ornithology but are interested and take notice of birds. Mr Collins has seen the Rifleman in thinned and pruned exotic pine forest. He has not seen it in unthinned pine or in Douglas fir, but questions whether this may be due to difficulty of sighting in the thicker foliage.

What happened between the fade-out from 1954 to 1961 will probably never be known. There could have been a small remnant missed by me or there could have been a movement from the direction of Lake Waikaremoana. The report by Mr Collins would seem to indicate the former to be the more likely. The area is so vast that I could easily have missed a small remaining population which has perhaps since expanded somewhat.

WHITEHEAD *(Mohoua albicilla)*

STATUS AND HABITS

Habitat

The Whitehead is definitely a bird of the forest. Of recent years it has even spread from native to adjoining exotic forests. Small numbers are, however, quite happy in light and sometimes scattered cover. This account deals only with the native forest where I worked and hunted. I found the beech forest to be preferred by the Whitehead but not much more so than the heavy timber. Like the Rifleman and some others, it is common up to more than 1300m (c4000 feet).

Flight

The Whitehead usually makes only short flights but they are not laboured. The belly hangs down, more so than with the Bellbird. In flight it is easy to note the strongly down-curved latter part of the tail, which is similar in varying degree to Brown Creeper, Yellowhead, Tui, Saddleback, Huia, Kokako and Piopio.

Nesting

Classed as a warbler, the Whitehead's nest, however, resembles that of a finch. In this area it builds up to 12m (c40 feet) or more, but most commonly quite low down, often on top of a tree fern frond. Other favourite sites are thick tight bushes or other shrubby growth. In the North Island it is the main victim of the parasitic Long-tailed Cuckoo.

Food

Its main food is insects, moths being favoured, but it also takes small fruits. It takes particular interest in searching the undersides of leaves and branches, very frequently doing this while hanging upside down. It also works on the bark of large trees for insects, larvae, etc. Flocks or parties move through the bush very fast. Fantails and parakeets often follow flocks of Whiteheads for insects disturbed.

Song

The main song is a very strong high-pitched descending warble. As the Whitehead is particularly vocal the result is that many more are heard than seen, even though this bird is by no means difficult to see. The estimate of 1 seen to 20 heard, given below, was made after careful consideration of this feature. Besides the main song it has a variety of lesser calls. It answers very readily to an imitation of its notes and approaches its caller closely.

Flocking

In summer small parties of up to 8 or more are common. In the non-breeding part of the year flocks are often of 40 or more. Such flocks here are composed of loose groups, the whole flock often a mile or more from the next one.

ANALYSIS OF MONTHLY CHARTS

(Brackets = total birds seen plus estimate of birds heard only).
Proportion seen to heard: 1 seen to 20 heard and not seen.

TIHOI

The total of birds seen from May 1944 to April 1946 was 5032 (105,672).

Count days per month for 24 months averaged 21.6; days seen 19.2; days not seen 2.4.

Daily counts of birds per month ranged from 0 to 50.

Count days totalled 519 and the total birds seen 5032, giving an average of 9.7 (203.7) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

Unlike the Rifleman, which inexplicably was more abundant at Tihoi than at Arataki, the Whitehead was in similar numbers in both places.

MINGINUI

The total of birds seen from part 1946 to part 1961 was 79,229 (1,663,809).

Count days per month for 170 months averaged 20.5; days seen 17.9; days not seen 2.6.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 150.

Count days totalled 3487 and the total birds seen 79,229, giving an average of 22.7 (476.7) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

Throughout the 170 months covered at Minginui from 1946 to 1961 Whitehead numbers held fairly well, counts varying frequently, but not to the extent of the Silvereye (St. Paul 1975: 281) and the Rifleman. Table 1 shows the averages of Whiteheads seen per count day for each calendar month for the whole of the observations. It indicates lower numbers for the winter months, then a rise in spring. This seems hard to account for as there could be no young to be added in September and October and few in November. It is, perhaps, possible that there was a partial winter movement to some native forest in lower country or to the lower exotic forests. More likely though a lessening of song during the winter months would account for the drop, the birds being present but quieter.

TABLE 1 — Monthly averages of birds seen per count day

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
22.3	22.7	27.0	31.4	16.5	18.0	18.1	19.4	28.1	24.0	24.6	21.4

This table does not indicate, however, the changes in yearly and seasonal counts as shown in Table 2. 1952 and 1953 were very poor years for the Whitehead, also for the Pied Tit and other species, while September 1954 to March 1956 was particularly good. Table 2 shows the range of fluctuations, some years or periods being lumped together when counts were similar.

TABLE 2 — Averages of birds seen per count day for the periods shown.

May 1946 to Dec 1947	23.2
1948 - 1950 (complete years)	28.5
1951 (complete year)	14.3
Jan 1952 to Aug 1954	2.5
Sept 1954 to Mar 1956	40.0
Apr 1956 to Dec 1959	24.9
Jan 1960 to Apr 1961	14.7

It is hoped that 1960-61 did not represent the setting in of a general decline after I left the bush in April 1961. The Whitehead would have an advantage in regard to survival in that when the heavy timber bush is destroyed it will still do well in lesser numbers in the beech forest and if the beech is eventually cut down for commercial purposes this bird has already shown that it adapts well to exotic forest.

WAIAU

The total of birds seen on hunting trips for parts of 47 months (from 1 to 24 days per month) was 25,196 (529,116).

Count days per month averaged 5; days seen 5.
Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 400.
Count days totalled 234 and the total birds seen 25,196, giving an average of 107.6 (2,259.6) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

The very high rate of 107.6 seen per count day was due to my doing nearly all of my hunting in the flocking season, from January to May, when I would encounter several flocks in a day. When working at Minginui I would not be moving about and would see perhaps only one or two flocks or just some odd small lots.

PIED TIT *(Petroica macrocephala)*

STATUS AND HABITS

Habitat

This species prefers to live mostly in either heavy or light bush but can also be found in second growth, in scrub and in plantations of exotic forest. The beech is somewhat less favoured than the heavy podocarp forest. Those living in the higher country prefer the main, more open streams where the vegetation of the banks is more dense. In such streams I have often seen it standing on a stone out in the rushing water and catching little flies. When living at the edge of cover it will fly as far as 100 m or so out into the open for food, especially when feeding young.

Flight

Flight is usually for short distances, with movements quick and sharply darting. To satisfy its curiosity it will flit from tree to tree, clinging to vertical trunks and looking to all sides of a human visitor.

Nesting

Others of its own kind are kept at a distance from the nest and both birds display and try to lure intruders away. This is not effective, however, with the stoat, which I consider to be mostly responsible for a serious decline in this species. Introduced rats are also to blame. Either of these pests will take the parent as well as the eggs and young.

In different seasons the Pied Tit seems to nest here at different heights, in big trees 9 m to 12 m up in a wet season and close to the ground in an old stump, or a bank, in a dry season. One pair built a nest under the eaves of my hut. A gale blew it down so I replaced it and propped it up with a board. The bird promptly occupied it. Once the hen is incubating the cock brings all her food. He calls as he approaches, the hen leaves the nest and he feeds her at up to 6 m away from it. She then returns by a roundabout route. You would wonder how he can make the approach call, when, as I have seen him, with a row of ants right out to the tip of his bill, 11 or so,

and he made the full warbling call as usual. Normally he feeds her all the time she is sitting except when she leaves the nest for a wash or preen. At such times he stands guard until she comes back.

Food

As with other insectivorous birds it feeds on insects, ants, worms, grubs and other small life, working diligently on tree trunks and branches and often on the ground. Often a pair would stay with me most of the day for the food I disturbed. Logs being hauled over dirt tracks also disturbed a rich source of food.

Song

The full song of the male is something like "weedle-weedle-weedle," high pitched and descending. I think it is the female which mostly gives the single sharp high-pitched note but the male does it too.

ANALYSIS OF MONTHLY CHARTS

(Brackets = total birds seen plus estimate of birds heard only).
Proportion seen to heard: 1 seen to 3 heard and not seen.

TIHOI

The total of birds seen for the two years, May 1944 to April 1946 was 3,223 (12,892).

Count days per month for 24 months averaged 21.9; days seen 21.7; days not seen 0.2.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 18.

Total count days were 519 and the total birds seen 3223 giving an average of 6.2 (24.8) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

It is to be noted that Tihoi had a daily average of 6.2 while Minginui had 2.6. This is hard to understand as there was no noticeable difference in the nature of the respective habitats.

MINGINUI

The total of birds seen from part 1946 to part 1961 was 9,047 (36,188).

Count days per month for 170 months averaged 20.5; days seen 16.9; days not seen 3.6.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 12.

Total count days were 3487 and total birds seen 9047 giving an average of 2.6 (10.4) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

From 1946 to 1961 at Minginui the Pied Tit, compared with some other species, did not show great variation in numbers. Table 1 gives the average numbers per count day for each calendar month for the full period. It shows a proportionately rather large increase in the winter months whereas the Whitehead shows a drop, but over the

summer the Pied Tit drops while the Whitehead holds well. This would seem to indicate that the Pied Tit of the higher beech country makes a partial movement down to the podocarp forest in autumn and winter, returning in spring for breeding. The counts for the Waiau area tend to confirm such a movement but are too sparse to confirm it fully.

TABLE 1 — Monthly averages of birds seen per count day

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2.5	2.6	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.1	2.3	1.6	1.4

The yearly figures are shown in Table 2. Again there is a serious drop in 1952 and 1953 as with other species. This is followed by a partial recovery for the next four years, a peak in 1958, quite good figures for 1959 and 1960, then a dismal showing for the first four months of 1961 (to the end of the period). As this species does not flock it does not show part year variations to the extent of those of the Whitehead.

TABLE 2 — Averages of birds seen per count day for the periods shown

May 1946 to Dec 1947	4.00	(4.00, 4.00)
1948	4.30	
1949-1951	3.37	(3.30, 3.70, 3.10)
1952-1953	1.05	(0.50, 1.60)
1954-1957	2.12	(2.40, 2.20, 1.90, 2.00)
1958	3.40	
1959-1960	2.85	(2.80, 2.90)
1961 Jan to Apr	1.20	

The 1961 figure looks ominous but I would expect that the species will have recovered as it did after 1952-1953.

WAIAU

The total of Pied Tit seen on hunting trips to the Waiau, i.e., the back country bush, for parts of 47 months was 3325 (13,300).

Count days per month averaged 6; days seen 5.8; days not seen 0.2.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 32.

Total count days were 234 and the total birds seen 3325, giving an average of 14.2 (56.8) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

Compared with 6.2 per count day at Tihoi for its whole period and 2.6 at Minginui the higher figure of 14.2 at Waiau was to be expected as it was relatively undisturbed country and I was on the move so much in the bush.

NORTH ISLAND ROBIN *(Petroica australis longipes)*

STATUS AND HABITS

Habitat

In the Urewera Bush the Robin prefers dark gullies and well sheltered localities. It does not leave heavy cover here as it often does elsewhere. It is not plentiful in the higher forest, though some can be found in gullies right to the mountain tops. In one dark gully running right down to the Waiau Stream I saw c20 in a stretch of less than a kilometre. I had to take care not to double count because in following you for food exposed by your feet it can easily get in front of you in anticipation of your next step. The best method of circumventing this forward movement is to rake or kick up leaves and move on while the Robin is busily engaged in feeding on the disturbed small life.

Flight

The flight is similar to that of the Pied Tit. It has the same habit of flying closely from tree to tree to inspect the newcomer. No flight is made above cover. It can move very fast when chasing another bird out of its territory. At such times of excitement it shows a white patch just above and even right round the eye. This is not connected with the white patch above the bill. Another feature, incidentally, is that it has a little pinkish stripe running from the bill right back over and down to the upper wing coverts like the New Zealand Pipit *(Anthus n. novaeseelandiae)* and the Fernbird *(Bowdleria punctata)*. It can still fly well when its tail has been lost in the February moult.

Nesting

The nest is usually in the fork of a live or dead tree, in a hollow stump or broken off branch, or on a ledge on the trunk of an old tree where it is hard for most predators to reach. The stoat of course can reach it anywhere. Nesting territory as a whole is fiercely defended against its own kind or others. A human visitor will be almost struck and the parent will use the " broken wing trick " to lure him away. Sometimes it will go down on the ground and slowly wave its wings up and down like a huge dark butterfly, looking so pathetic that it arouses a feeling of guilt in the human intruder.

Food

The food is mainly insects and larvae, and, rarely, berries. It is very fond of butter and cake so was sure to turn up at my lunch-time. This familiarity has led to this little bird being a most engaging companion to the bushman. When I was splitting posts at the edge of the bush or along the timber tracks one would nearly always be in attendance, probably not the same one if I had moved some distance, as it is strictly territorial and one would not be allowed to move into

the domain of another. There is no pair bond outside the nesting season. When trimming a log and cutting or splitting it I had to watch that I did not step on the bird or drop a post on it. If old rubbish was being cleared off a prostrate log it would be right in on the job, coming to within six inches of my hands for the live food. However, when I picked up the camera it would give a " twit " and be off, though sometimes I could not get a photo because it came too close. Once when I turned over a log for cutting, my pet one gathered up the grubs, insects, earthworms, millipedes, etc., put them all along the top of the log, then took all except the millipedes up onto the moss on the large branch of a tree. Soon I saw it looking up at its cache from 8 to 9 m away and one of the worms was coming down through the moss. It flew up, picked it up, pinched it and put it back on the top. It then returned to the millipedes, hit them this way and that in sudden little jerks and, apparently in scorn, scattered them far and wide into the bush. Perhaps it considered them to be second class food. The species certainly has intelligence but some of its actions are hard for the human to interpret. One bright one went along the track ahead of me and waited at an old totara log for me to take off the bark for it. My pet one brought along a fledged young to feed it on the grubs and ants provided by my working.

Song.

The full song is a high musical five-note " tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet " sounded on a descending scale. There is a slight pause after the second " tweet " and the last three notes are shortened. It can be heard at a considerable distance. A sudden " twit " as one walks along will sometimes announce its arrival, though its approach from a distance is seldom seen. The " twit " is also used if it is disturbed. The rarely heard whisper song is not as faint as that of the Silvereye and is even more delightful.

ANALYSIS OF MONTHLY CHARTS

(Brackets = total birds seen plus estimate of birds heard only).

Proportion seen to heard: 1 seen to 4 heard and not seen.

TIHOI

The total of birds seen for the two years May 1944 to April 1946 was 875 (4375).

Count days per month for 24 months averaged 21.6; days birds seen 13.6; days not seen 8.

Daily counts of birds seen ranged from 0 to 11.

Count days totalled 519 and the total birds seen 875, giving an average of 1.7 (8.5) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

For this species the average of 1.7 seen is quite good because I was working part of the time in the cut-over area next to the main bush, but there were variations, which, however, do not appear to be

seasonal. From May to December 1944 the average per count day per month was 3.4 (17); from January to October 1945 1.43 (7.15) and from November 1945 to April 1946, when I left Tihoi, almost none at all. I can offer no explanation.

MINGINUI

The total of birds seen from part 1946 to part 1961 was 3414 (17,070).

Count days per month for 170 months averaged 20.5; days seen 10.5; days not seen 10.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 11.

Total count days were 3487 and total birds seen 3414 giving an average of 0.98 (4.9) per count day.

Notes on Analysis

Table 1 shows the average numbers per count day for each calendar month for the full period, 1946 to 1961. It does not indicate a drop in summer as in the case of the Pied Tit, nor do the winter counts have the appearance of any move to lower country so that it must be one of the most sedentary birds of the region.

TABLE 1 —Monthly averages of birds seen per count day

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0.9	0.8	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.8	1.3	1.5	1.0

The yearly figures are shown in Table 2. These do not follow the trend of the Whitehead or of the Pied Tit, except that the years 1952 and 1953 are again the poorest and the drop at the end of the whole period is greater.

TABLE 2 — Averages of birds seen per count day for the periods shown

May 1946 to Dec 1950	2.01 (1.63, 1.73, 2.44, 2.85, 1.38)
1951	0.74
1952-1953	0.30 (0.00, 0.06)
1954	0.10
1955-1956	0.38 (0.33, 0.44)
1957-1959	1.35 (1.17, 1.84, 1.06)
1960-1961	0.63 (0.51, 0.75)

The Robin is another bird which has adapted itself to the exotic pine forest. It has populated the Matea Block of the Kaingaroa State Forest where the pines adjoin the native bush. Since so much of the native bush is being destroyed it would be good policy to introduce the Robin and other insectivorous native birds to pine forests which they cannot reach of their own accord. It would be beneficial to both the birds and the pine forests.

WAIAU

The total of birds seen on hunting trips for parts of 47 months (from 1 to 24 days per month) was 1772 (37,212).

Count days per month averaged 5; days seen 4.4; days not seen 0.6.

Daily counts of birds ranged from 0 to 11.

Count days totalled 234 and the total birds seen 1772, giving an average of 7.6 (38) per count day.

Notes an Analysis

The Robin, as with the Whitehead and the Pied Tit, was readily seen owing to the bush being unspoiled and to my being on the move so much. However, the count of 7.6 per day while Tihoi had 1.7 and Minginui 0.98 indicates a much larger population for Waiau.

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SHORT NOTE

LITTLE WHIMBREL IN THE BAY OF PLENTY

When visiting Maketu Harbour on 6 January 1976, I spotted an unusual bird being chased by godwits which were coming onto a small island to roost, approximately 50 m off-shore. When the godwits settled down the bird quietly mixed among some Pied Stilts *(Himantopus himantopus)*. The bird seemed very nervous since it was continually standing up and sitting down. At that distance with a 25 x telescope I could not see the bill, but the light was good and the colour, shape and size of the bird seemed similar to that of a Golden Plover *(Pluvialis dominica)* except the neck which appeared longer.

Having rowed out to the opposite side of the island I managed to crawl close to the bird and had excellent views of the important features. The beak was about 30-50 mm long, down-curved and pinkish at the base. The legs were bluish-grey and there was a buffy coloured eye stripe. The crown was dark brown with a buff median stripe. Underparts were pale with brown streaks on the breast. After exhaustively studying the bird on the ground, I made it take flight to observe the rump which was brownish with a barred tail.

Later that day I sew the bird feeding on the mud, but it has not been seen since. I believe this to be the first record for the Bay of Plenty. Other notable waders seen here this season are: 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *(Calidris acuminata)*, 6 Long-billed Curlews *(Numenius madagascariensis)*, 7 Knot *(C. canutus)*, 2 Wrybilled Plovers *(Anarhynchus frontalis)* and 2 Turnstones *(Arenaria interpres.)*

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