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Dr BEN D. BELL, *Ecology Division D.S.I.R., P.O. Box 30466, Lower Hutt*; Present address — *Department of Zoology, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington.*

SHORT NOTE

WINTER NESTING OF N.Z. PIGEON

On 24 July 1976, the Canterbury section of the OSNZ conducted a census of the N.Z. Pigeons (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) present in Christchurch city. Of the six birds found in the area, one was sitting on a nest with one egg. The nest was a flimsy structure, 2.5m above the ground, in relatively dense shrubs in the native section of the botanical gardens.

The nest was kept under observation and the young hatched between 3-6 August. By 26 August, the chick's plumage had come to resemble that of the adults. As the chick grew older, the nest began to tilt with its weight, and the chick left the nest on 9 September.

The *Field Guide to the Birds of N.Z.* (Falla *et al.* 1970) gives the period of incubation as 30 days; hence the egg was probably laid between 4-7 July. The date of laying is unusual in that Oliver (*New Zealand Birds*, 1955) recorded eggs up to May and deduced that laying had occurred in July from the sighting of a fledgling in September. Falla *et al.* (1970) record eggs as late as June-July. All records from the nest record scheme are of eggs laid between September and April.

The interesting issue is whether the bird was a late or early nester. The weather pattern at the time would indicate the latter, as on 21-22 June, Christchurch had its heaviest snowfall since 1945. From 25 June until 6 July, the weather was fine and sunny with quite warm temperatures during the day, but frosts at night, sometimes severe.

Accordingly, it is possible that this period of weather deluded the pigeon into breeding earlier than normal.

RAY GENET, 20 Morrison Ave, Christchurch 5; ROB GUEST, 62 Dacre St, Christchurch 6