

## SHORT NOTES

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### UNUSUAL FEEDING OF STARLING

An unusual feeding technique of the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was witnessed on 18 April 1977 during a visit to the Masterton Borough Sewage Ponds. On one pond, particularly, several lots in twos were seen flying low over the water and gliding down with feet partially extended to pick up food from the water's surface, in the manner of a swallow. Later, a party of ten birds in a fairly compact assemblage was doing likewise. Small flocks of Starlings were feeding also along the concrete verge of the pond. There is no mention in *The Handbook of British Birds* (Witherby *et al.*) of Starlings feeding from the surface of water.

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### RED-KNEED DOTTEREL (*Charadrius cinctus*) — FIRST RECORD FOR NEW ZEALAND

On 14 March 1976 at 0900 hours, just after high tide, the authors and Sybil Quin were watching a mixed flock of waders as part of the monthly census at the Manawatu Estuary. Separate from the main group, which included Knot (50), Wrybill (18) and Terek Sandpiper (2), feeding along the tidal edge was a strange dotterel. At first glance the bird resembled a Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*), with which we were all familiar, but its markings were soon seen to be quite different. We moved closer and, using 8x40 binoculars, watched it for thirty minutes at distances varying between twenty and thirty-five metres. The morning light, although not ideal, was bright and viewing conditions were good.

While under observation the bird was extremely active, running along the tidal edge, feeding rapidly, picking at the surface and on occasions entering the water. It flew only once, wheeling with the mob, its flight noted as being rapid, quite unlike the undulating action of the Black-fronted Dotterel.

Most distinctive was the white bar along the leading edge of the closed wing, and, when the bird was watched in flight, the broad white trailing edge of the wing (formed by the white secondaries) contrasted with the darker remainder. A broad black breast band narrowing slightly at centre-front tapered to a narrow collar around the neck and onto the hind-neck. Throat, chin and side of the neck were white, creating a clear-cut triangular patch contrasting with the black collar and uniform grey head. Underparts and underwing were

white. On these features alone we (and the Rare Birds Committee; see Annual Report 1976/77) were in no doubt that the bird was, in fact, an adult Red-kneed Dotterel (*Charadrius cinctus*).

Although named the Red-kneed Dotterel the red knees, or more correctly as Mr R. B. Sibson (pers. comm.) notes "red ankles," are not readily distinguishable in the field due to the active behaviour of the species. Another possible ambiguity which we have noted is that the scientific name *Charadrius cinctus* = banded dotterel, and we suggest the local Banded Dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*) might be more correctly called the Double-banded Dotterel as it is in Australia where both species occur.

Although the Red-kneed Dotterel was certainly the highlight of the year, comprehensive counts by Manawatu members produced an unusually high number of rarities. Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia regia*) numbers reached a record peak of 52 in March 1976 and, interestingly, a small group stayed over summer. In early December a single White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) joined them and remained till February 1977. Other notable records included: 14 Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novaehollandiae*), 31 Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*), one juvenile N.Z. Dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*), 3 Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), 3 Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), 17 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*), 3 Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*), 7 Curlew Sandpiper (*C. ferruginea*) and a possible Baird's Sandpiper (*C. bairdi*) [see Annual Report, Rare Birds Committee, 1976/77]. These results perhaps show that regular watching at an estuary can pay dividends.

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#### THE ENERGY VALUE OF THE YOLK RESERVE IN A NORTH ISLAND BROWN KIWI CHICK (*Apteryx australis mantelli*)

Reid 1971 (*Notornis* 18 (4): 250-252) found that the yolk of a fresh kiwi egg contained 43.3% water and 56.7% solids; and Calder & Rowe 1977 (*Notornis* 24 (2): 129-135) found that the yolk of another egg had an energy value of 18.16 kilojoules (or 4.34 Kcal.) per gram wet weight.

An egg laid at the Mt Bruce Reserve measuring 126.9 x 78.3 mm and having a calculated fresh weight of 435-440g produced a chick which immediately following hatching and while wet weighed 351.3g. This chick died 37 hours after emerging from the shell and at the time of death its weight had decreased by 60.8g to 290.5g. Surface moisture on newly hatched chicks is thought to weigh about 15-25g so the actual