

SHORT NOTES

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