

PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF BIRDS OF N.Z.—IV.

BANDED DOTTEREL.

The banded dotterel, in contrast to the larger and much rarer New Zealand dotterel, is found in most districts of the Dominion and at the Chatham Islands, frequenting estuaries, beaches, shingle river-beds, sparsely-grassed pastures, notably in the higher country, and occasionally, especially in the non-breeding season, lands recently cropped. In the autumn and winter it congregates into flocks, sometimes numbering hundreds of birds. When breeding it is dispersed widely, mainly on the shingle river-beds and in estuaries. The bird begins to breed in August and continues normally until the end of the year, though odd birds may be found in January with young still in their care. In full breeding plumage the banded dotterel is recognised without difficulty, as no other bird in New Zealand has two distinctive bands on its underparts, as is the case with this species.

Much more information is required about the bird's movements in the non-breeding season. There is evidence of a considerable northward movement from the South to the North Island and of a partial migration across the Tasman Sea to Australia, where this dotterel has never been recorded as a breeding species. Some birds, however, remain in the South Island, and a much larger number in the North Island, especially in the Auckland province.

The movements of the banded dotterel was one of the subjects selected for special study by the society some years ago, under the organisation of C. A. Fleming and R. H. D. Stidolph, but surprisingly little information was received from many areas, in spite of an appeal for detailed reports about the bird's movements. In view of this position, it may be of interest to republish the desiderata required (vide "Interim Report on Banded Dotterel Movements," Second Annual Report, 1941):—

1. South Island data from representative inland and coastal localities.
2. More details from North Island, e.g., Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, etc., to ascertain limits between areas of winter scarcity (Wellington) and of winter abundance (Auckland).
3. More breeding season data—earliest and latest egg dates for all localities; possible correlation between duration of season and extent of migration or latitude.
4. Numbers of stated localities, at least monthly, for a year, sufficient for representation by graphs, are most helpful.
5. Evidence of birds leaving or arriving from overseas is badly wanted.
6. Ultimately leg-ringing operations will be necessary.

The photographs with this issue are excellent studies of this bird, one showing a dotterel sitting on its nest, and the other a bird in the act of displaying. Both were taken on the Ashley River-bed by Mr. K. V. Bigwood, of Christchurch.—R.H.D.S.

SILVER-EYE EATING LARGE MOTH (Porina).—When I was on holiday at Levin during the May school vacation this year, I saw a silver-eye in a garden catch a fairly large moth, which it battered on a stem of chrysanthemum. The moth fell to the ground several times but was retrieved and reduced finally to a pulp and eaten. The wings were left lying on the ground. The silver-eye preened its feathers for a time, still in the chrysanthemum, and then dropped to the ground and ate the moth's wings. It was one of a small flock, which was accompanied by a fantail. The fantail snapped up insects disturbed by the silver-eyes.—(Mrs.) N. F. Stidolph, Masterton.