

the stitch bird at close quarters. The first bird I saw (19/11/49) was a male, clearly seen from a distance of a few feet, about 10 yards up Te Waikohare from Mr. Parkin's fowl yard. Later, I saw a female a few dozen yards further up the stream. Still higher up, I saw another pair which seemed to be making a round of their territory, passing me regularly every 9 or 10 minutes. Two distinct calls were heard—the usual "tzit-tzit," and also a bell-like whistle, like a cross between the note of a tui and that of a whitehead. After this I saw and/or heard stitch birds each time I went into Te Waikohare. Sometimes I would see a pair or at other times only a single bird fly past me. I never saw more than two pairs together. On 26/11/49, at 6.0 a.m. a male was heard calling very close to the house. There follows a resume of the more important observations that I noted: Two pairs, left branch of Te Waikohare and 1 pair right branch, 20/11/49; 1 pair, lower Te Waikohare, male seen 10 feet away, also an odd female seen nearby, 20/11/49; two pairs, Te Waikohare, 21/11/49; one pair, Te Waikohare, 27/11/49; female, Te Waikohare, 28/11/49; one pair, Waipawa, 2/12/49; female, Summit Track, 3/12/49; male seen 6 to 8 feet away, Thumb Track, 7/12/49; three males, Tirikakawa, 8/12/49. Stitch birds seemed to be cleaning out the nest noted by M. C. Hanna and B. D. Heather (4/1/48) in a large pohutukawa, a chain off the Thumb Track. Miss Brown and I noted another stitch bird call, new to us, in Tirikakawa Stream. As one of us expressed it, it was like a "kingfisher's note sawn in half."

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*).—I saw two birds near the house and heard another singing in a manuka at the entrance of Waipawa.

Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).—Five seen in the Bull Paddock but I think they were to be found in more abundance elsewhere.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*).—A pair seen near the South-west Landing, behaving as if nesting (22/11/49). One was seen at the entrance to Waipawa.

Song Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*).—Breeding.

Blackbird (*T. merula*).—Four nests were found—two with eggs in the orchard, one with three young in pohutukawa in Te Waikohare Stream; one with two young, Thumb Track.

Hedge Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*).—Mrs. Parkin found two nests during my visit.

Lark (*Alauda arvensis*).—A group of five seen in the paddocks near the South-West Landing.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—A flock of c. 20 was seen flying out to sea from Waipawa mouth. Another group of eight was seen close to the house.

White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).—A pair of magpies frequented the Flat during my visit. According to Mr. Parkin, they appeared on 1/9/49.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN TARARUAS.—In February, 1950, on a solo tramp in the Tararuas, I was on a cleared ridge (about 2000ft. to 2500ft.) when a harrier flew from below just in front of me and little higher than my head. It was immediately followed by a bush hawk which "zoomed" and then dived straight at the harrier. The latter turned over and struck with its right leg, making a loud hissing noise. The bush hawk evaded and made a swift climbing turn (an Immelman) and dived again. The harrier repeated and then flew rapidly into the bush below. The bush hawk flew to the top of a tall dead tree and let out a triumphant shriek. At night, between 10 o'clock and midnight, I was sitting on a tall stump in a clearing a little away from the hut in the moonlight. I was surprised at the number of small flights of birds that passed over in no particular direction, but from and to all points of the compass and flying fairly high. I had no conception what they were. I had come out partly to see if I could spot a bird I had heard

screech several times. Five different moreporks had been calling; one had been in the tree outside the hut door, but the other call was a high pitched long screech. I had subconsciously registered it as what we termed at Home a screech owl and went out to see if I could spot it. I had located the call as coming from a tall more or less dead tree at the south end of the clearing, and had been on my stump perhaps half an hour when an owl flew out from that direction and circled round me twice, then flew back into the shadow of the tree and screeched two or three times. I was unable in the moonlight to distinguish any colouring—it looked either deep black when between me and the moon or silvery grey when circling the other side, but it struck me as being about half as big again as a morepork, two of which had previously silently flitted by. I took it for granted to be the screech owl of England both from size and voice—but I can find no record of this owl in "Oliver." I heard the bird (without question an owl of some species, as I know from its perfectly noiseless flight and the general shape and the formation of the wing, as it circled me twice within a few yards), several times through the night (owing to a grey 'possum which would share the hut with me I had very little sleep). Later on it was hunting in the valley below but the shrill screech could easily be heard at intervals.—A. A. Savell, Levin. [It is possible that this bird was an Australian barn owl (*Tyto alba*). One was obtained in Westland in 1947.—Ed.]

WESTPORT BIRD NOTES (period March, 1949, to June, 1950).—There is a great variety and abundance of bird life in this district. Unfortunately the average resident has little appreciation and respect for it. Except for small clumps of bush along the streams and rivers and in swampy areas the countryside is mostly cleared. However, there remains much bush on the surrounding hills and in the Buller Gorge five to six miles away. Approximate distances shown are from the Post Office in the centre of the town. Black Shag: Often seen in Buller River and near mouth of Orowaiti River; 1½m. White Heron: An annual visitor. Seen May, 1949, near bridge over Orowaiti River; 1m. Subsequently reported from Ngakawau. Again seen near bridge on 17/6/50. White-faced Heron: Several pairs are usually to be seen on the banks of the Buller and Orowaiti rivers; 4/12/49, one seen at Tauranga Bay, 8m; 17/6/50, three at Orowaiti River. Black Swan: 1949, one at Orowaiti R. Bittern: 17/6/50, two seen in small swampy area about half-mile from P.O. Reported to be not uncommon. Harrier: Not uncommon; 21/6/50, 1 seen flying high over centre of town. Pukeko: Not common. One alighted on tree at McKennas Creek, 2m.; small number at Firdown, 5m.; 1 on Nine-Mile Road, 3m. Pied Oystercatcher: May, 1949, often up to six to be seen at teatime near mouth of Orowaiti R.; 2m. Black Oystercatcher: 1949, one or two occasionally near mouth of Orowaiti R.; 1½m. Banded Dotterel: 2/1/50, one at Carters Beach, 3m. Red-billed Gull: 1950, numbers seen in ground of Westport South School. Wood Pigeon: 27/8/49 and 23/10/49, one at McKennas Creek, 2m.; 5/11/49, one at Giles Creek, 3m. Not common around Westport. Morepork: 13/6/50, young morepork caught; later released. Moreporks are heard from time to time about the town. Kingfisher: Very common and always to be seen near bridge over Orowaiti R., 1m. 18/6/50, counted 17 on wire between two telegraph poles near Orowaiti Bridge. Pipit: Very common on outskirts of town and in surrounding countryside. Fern Bird: 1/7/50, two on Caroline Terrace, 5m. This is pakihi land, wet and covered with stunted manuka, rushes, etc., a most bleak-looking area and entirely unsuited for cultivation. Grey Warbler: Fairly common; often seen or heard. Yellow-breasted Tit: 4/6/49, one at Reservoir, 3m.; 17/7/49, one at McKennas Creek; 28/8/49, several near Seddonville, 25m.; 5/11/49, one at Giles Creek; 22/12/49, one at Buller R.; 1/7/50, three at Omanu Creek, 6m. Robin: 7/3/50, two at Ohikanui R., 10m.; quite tame; frequently reported from this area. Fantail (Pied): Very common and always to be seen about town and outskirts. Black form also fairly common. Tui: August, 1949, very common at McKennas Creek when