

A NORTH ISLAND ROBIN NESTING RECORD.

By C. H. and Mrs. Parkin, Little Barrier Island.

A freshly completed empty nest of a North Island robin was found on November 13, 1950; six feet up in the fork of a large kanuka on the bank of the Waikohare Stream, on the Little Barrier Island. One part of the tree partially overhung the nest, providing shelter from the rain. Otherwise the position was very open and exposed to the light. The nest was built of fibre, tree-fern scales and cobweb, the lining being of fern scale only. The eggs were usually partly sunk in the loose lining. The nest was found on November 12 by a visitor to the Island, Mr. H. R. McKenzie. He watched it for the most part until November 25, after which we continued to make frequent visits until the chicks left. Our notes are:—

Nov. 13 and 14.—Nest still empty.

Nov. 15—H.R. McK. accidentally missed visiting.

Nov. 16—3.25 p.m., one egg (C.H.P.)

Nov. 17.—10.50 a.m., two eggs. This is the full clutch for this species. The female demonstrated and silently led away from the nest. Perching easily on the side of a tree-trunk she slowly fluttered her wings, raising them high above her back like a large dark butterfly. Such a picture of gentleness made the observer feel ashamed of intruding.

Nov. 18.—In three visits, once on nest, twice absent; apparently not incubating.

Nov. 19 and 20.—Severe storm; no visit made.

Nov. 21—10.15 a.m. and 6.50 p.m., female sitting; obviously incubating, not disturbed.

Nov. 22 and on to December 2.—Sitting hard, the female only; male seen four feet from nest on November 29.

Dec. 4—6.30 p.m., chicks just hatched, still wet. The female was carrying eggshells away to 20 feet from nest.

Dec. 6 and 7—Female brooding, not disturbed.

Dec. 8—Noon, female flew off nest to be fed by male on nearby tree.

Dec. 10—10.30 a.m., female flew off nest and male fed chicks.

Dec. 14.—6.45 p.m., female near.

Dec. 15.—2.30 p.m., both birds appeared when nest was approached. The female feigned injury on the ground, while the male attacked, coming within a foot of the observer's face.

Dec. 17 and 18—Parents guarding nest.

Dec. 19 to 22—Seen to be feeding chicks on insects.

Dec. 23—8.15 a.m., female near, chicks in nest; 4.30 p.m., chicks had flown.

The chicks at no time, except just after hatching, showed any movement when approached. This seemed strange in comparison with other species, which, under the same circumstances, will solicit food. Perhaps this form of concealment is adopted by the robin because of its building in open situations.

The determination of the incubation period is difficult. The start of actual incubation is always hard to ascertain, and in this case the storm complicated matters. Including November 21, the period was 14 days. If incubation commenced during the storm of November 19 and 20, the period would be either 15 or 16 days.

The period from hatching to leaving the nest was 19 days.



Photo: W. P. Mead.

ROBIN ON NEST, LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND, 23/11/50.