

## TEREK SANDPIPER AT MIRANDA.

By H. R. McKenzie, Clevedon.

The appearance of a Terek sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*) at Miranda on 22/11/51 is the first recorded occurrence for New Zealand. I was scanning some small waders when I saw a sandpiper flying with some wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*). The party settled on the mud near the tide line and I immediately focussed with my binoculars to ascertain the species of the odd bird. At once I saw the bright orange legs and then the long dark upturned bill. R. B. Sibson has long maintained that we should see in New Zealand any migrant birds which visit Australia. Acting upon this theory I have studied the descriptions of such birds so had no trouble in recognising this one, which has such distinctive features.

Further observations were made as follow:—1/1/52, D. A. Urquhart; 2/1/52, R. B. Sibson and H. T. Revell; 4/1/52, C. A. Fleming, W. P. Mead, D. Mead and H.R.McK.; 6/1/52, Miss N. Macdonald and H.R.McK. It was not found on January 13, 19 and 20, but was located on March 1, three miles south-east along the coast, resting in a cultivated paddock with a flock of c. 900 wrybill. It rose, calling, at some distance, and flew right away.

The orange legs and feet and long, dark upturned bill have already been mentioned. The base of the bill was yellowish; head all grey; no definite eye-stripe; large rounded grey patch covering side of neck, shoulder and upper side of breast; the narrow space across the breast between the patches very light grey; white under; pronounced white hind edge of wing in flight. This description, compared with Witherby ("The Handbook of British Birds"), indicates that this bird was not fully mature.

Its actions on the ground were quick, very much like sanderling, as it fed on the mud among scattered wrybill and banded dotterel. It appeared to feed by quick dabs and was once seen to take a small crab which it apparently swallowed after shaking off the legs. The bill was held horizontally when the bird was standing or running. R.B.S. was reminded of the common sandpiper when it tilted or bobbed the after part of its body and also when it quivered its wings.

In flight it was quick and graceful, resembling Geoffroy's sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaulti*). When chased persistently in the air by a red-billed gull it evaded the attacks with ease.

A variety of calls was heard, all during flight, and this was found to be the best indication of the presence of the bird. R.B.S. described a pleasant musical trill "weeta-weeta-weet," which corresponds well with the description of Miss N. Macdonald and H.R.McK., "weet weet" and "weet wt wt." C.A.F., W.P.M., D.M., and H.R.McK. heard mostly a three-note call after the style of whimbrel or wandering tattler, but the third note was not so full, clear, sharp and musical. Sometimes a whistled ripple of about six notes run together was used.

The species is said by Witherby to be quiet, but D. A. Urquhart, on 1/1/52, using a telephoto lens, could only secure rather distant photographs, while on 6/1/52 Miss N. Macdonald, using a similar lens, was unable to get within range, the bird being quite wild and shy.

According to Witherby the Terek sandpiper breeds from Finland across to Siberia and winters from N.E. Africa across to India and down to the Malay Archipelago and Australia. It is extremely rare in Australia so it is fortunate to have an occurrence in New Zealand.

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NEST RECORDS AND BEACH PATROLS.—Members are asked to complete these cards and forward them as soon as possible to the organisers of these schemes. Nest records should be sent to Mr. J. King, Box 448, Masterton, and beach patrol cards to Mr. J. M. Cunningham.