

TEREK SANDPIPER IN NEW ZEALAND IN WINTER.

By R. B. Sibson, Auckland.

The presence of a single Terek sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*) near Miranda, in the Firth of Thames, between December, 1951, and March, 1952, has been reported by H. R. McKenzie (Notornis 4, 212). It is now known that two birds of this species spent the winter in the same locality. The second bird seems to have joined the one already present some time after March 1st, perhaps having come up from the south with other waders. The two were still together on September 28th.

On 15/6/52, Miss N. Macdonald, R. N. Buttle and I, during a census of waders in the Firth of Thames, had been allotted the coast to the north-west of the Waitakaruru River. As we were examining a large flock of rather somnolent wrybills, N.M. remarked that on the edge of the flock two small waders with orange legs were moving about. Weather conditions for identification were perfect—no wind and crisp winter sunshine, with the light behind us—so that with telescope and field glasses x 8 even at 100 yards we could be certain that we had under observation two Terek sandpipers. To approach within 40 yards was not difficult. Their long upturned bills were now clearly visible. Feeding actively they wandered away from the wrybills among scattered stilts and banded dotterels. Finally, in flight, they passed close to us, conspicuously showing the white-tipped secondaries. No trill was heard.

On 13/7/52 they were seen in the same locality by J. C. Davenport, G. W. Gummer and D. A. Urquhart. On 28/9/52 they were again located, but not with such wrybills as had not yet gone south, by F. Murray, T. Renouf and Miss L. M. Burnside. Thus, another Arctic wader joins the company of those which may remain in New Zealand during the southern winter.

INTRODUCTION INTO NEW ZEALAND OF THE AUSTRALIAN BLUE WREN IN 1923.

By K. E. Westerskov, Wildlife Section, Department of Internal Affairs.

During examination of a series of old files of the former Department of Tourist and Health Resorts on acclimatisation matters, a file on the introduction of the Australian blue wren (*Malurus cyaneus*) attracted my attention.

Thomson (1922) could not well have had any information about the introduction of this species, as the birds were not introduced until January, 1923, although action in the matter began as early as 1918, and none of the following accounts, such as Thomson (1926) and Oliver (1930) mention the importation of this bird.

As a careful look through the literature has not disclosed any published record of the blue wren in New Zealand, it seems that a short statement of the matter should be published, especially as it is remotely possible that remnants of the species might still persist.

It may also here be mentioned that the blue wren still is on the list of absolutely protected birds, included in the New Zealand Gazette of 27/2/1952, under the name: blue wren (or superb warbler) (*Malurus cyaneochlamys*).

The first correspondence about the introduction of this bird dates back to May, 1918—initiated by the Tourist and Health Resorts Department. Importation of up to 12 pairs of blue wrens was authorised by the Minister of Internal Affairs on 3/9/1918, in a permit which stated that the importation was "for the purpose of liberating them within the Rotorua Acclimatisation District."

Through the New Zealand Government Agent in Sydney, contact was arranged with the Director of the Sydney Zoo to try to get the birds. Five pairs of blue wrens were ordered and during the next couple of years a fair number of letters crossed the Tasman Sea re blue wrens.

Finally, on 24/1/1923, twelve birds arrived with the s.s. Ulimaroa in Auckland. The ranger of the Rotorua Acclimatisation Society, Mr. W. Cobeldick, went to Auckland and picked them up. There were four males and eight females, costing a total of £4/2/6.

A short account in the "Rotorua Chronicle," 31/1/1923, gives some general information on the blue wren. The N.Z. Gazette of 15/3/1923 contains an official announcement: "Blue wren or superb warbler absolutely protected," as effective from 1/3/1923, the bird being included in the First Schedule to the Animals Protection and Game Act, 1921-22.

The blue wrens were kept for a couple of weeks at the ranger's home, after which they were liberated in four separate localities, in groups of two females to one male at Rangitaiki, Rotoma Hill, Mokoia Island (in Lake Rotorua) and at the base of Mt. Tongariro.

Nothing more is recorded about the fates of the introduced blue wrens and a recent paper on the birds of the Rotorua District (Phillipps and Lindsay, 1948) makes no mention of the blue wrens.

The colder climate, less abundant growth of vegetation, lack of accustomed food, and the small number of birds released are apparently major reasons in the failure of the experiment.

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WHITE HERON FEEDING HABITS.—On April 14, 1952, a white heron was seen on the mudflats near the Taipa camping ground, four miles north of Mangonui, Northland. The bird was feeding on the mudflats at almost low water. Sometimes it would stretch fully upright and peer around as if searching the water; then it would stalk very slowly forward with neck outstretched; on seeing something (or just prior to attack) the neck would develop a kink just below the head, so that the head was brought back a little; then the whole neck would swing downwards, with the kink still in place, and there would be a sudden darting forward of the head and bill as the spring-like kink straightened out; a small object was snatched from the water, and the head raised quickly to swallow it. The stalking was upstream, very slowly. A catch was being made about every half-minute, and I watched this for about twenty minutes. This bird remained in the area for some time but it finally disappeared on May 3. However, a heron was later seen at Mangonui, five miles away, and was presumably the same bird.—H. G. Warburton.

POSTURING IN LESSER REDPOLL.—Further studies by the writer of the habits of the lesser redpoll indicate that he was mistaken in his view put forward in a previous issue that nuptial displays in this species are limited to a couple of phases only. In fact, there are several kinds of postures to be seen at this stage. In addition to those already described, the cock performs a hovering, hesitant manner of flight over the hen, apparently just before copulation takes place. There is also what might be called supplication flight. Two forms coexist. The writer has watched a cock and hen bird making threat calls, and anxiety notes, characteristic of mated birds in the presence of strange birds entering a gully held as a