

OCCURRENCE OF "RED-LEGGED" HERONS IN N.Z.

By Mrs. L. E. Walker, Dunedin.

In "Ibis," (Vol. 94, p. 363) there appeared an article on the occurrence of red legs of varying intensity in herons, the species referred to being *Ardea cinerea* (England), *Ardeola ibis* (River Niger, in Africa), *Ardeola grayii* (India), *Nycticorax nycticorax* (India) and *Egretta alba* (India), most of the reports referring to birds in breeding plumage.

On August 28, 1949, I was observing white-faced herons (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*) at Merton, Otago, where these birds frequent the mud-flats. One bird with very pale plumage was conspicuous because of its bright red legs. After watching this bird for some time, I was puzzled about the legs. Later that same day I returned to the area and was fortunate in being able to approach within a reasonable distance of the bird and watch it through binoculars for some ten minutes or so, again taking particular notice of the legs. As this bird was seen in August, it would then have assumed its breeding plumage and the record fits in with the overseas records. Then, on May 26, 1952, one of our local members, Mr. W. J. Noble, recorded a white-faced heron in the Anderson's Bay Inlet, Dunedin, with legs light red in colour. The next record came from Waikouaiti, Otago, where, on September 26, 1952, Miss B. McDougall saw a white-faced heron alight on a tall macrocarpa tree in her garden. In this case the feet were fleshy pink but the colour of the legs was not noted. On October 5, 1952, the writer, together with three keen bird observers, visited Waikouaiti Lagoon and saw a white-faced heron with red legs fly slowly over it. The fifth record came to hand on October 10, 1952, when Mrs. I. Tily saw two white-faced herons at Karitane, Otago; one bird was smaller than the other and had dull red legs with just a tinge of yellow near the feathering. Its feet, when lifted out of the water, were clear pink. The other bird had greenish-yellow legs.

In these occurrences of "red-legged" herons all the records are of the white-faced species and all have been recorded in Otago. Would any member observing red legs or red bills on any species of heron, please communicate with the writer, 15 Cornwall Street, Vauxhall, Dunedin, E 1, giving the date, place where seen, species, degree of redness (pale, dull, bright) of legs, feet or bill.

BANDED DOTTEREL (*Charadrius bicinctus*) DISTRACTION DISPLAY.—A previous observer indicates that banded dotterels use their distraction display (dragging a "broken" wing) only when they have chicks. This may be a local characteristic, for it was not my experience recently. When on a brief visit to Cable Bay (near Taipa, Doubtless Bay) during December, 1951, a banded dotterel's nest was discovered on December 17. While we were some 150 yards from the nest the birds flew overhead and across our path, uttering agitated cries. When within 30 yards of the nest they dropped to the beach in front of us trailing their drooping wings and endeavouring to lead us away. One bird was markedly bolder than the other and came much closer to us than its mate. The nest—a depression in the sand surrounded by seaweed, shells and driftwood—contained three eggs. Having photographed the nest and birds we followed one to see how far it would lead us. It took us the length of the beach (over $\frac{1}{4}$ mile) and would have taken us further had we not run out of enthusiasm. When we passed by some hours later, one bird was sitting on the nest while the other (probably on sentry duty) was perched on a rock some distance away.—S. A. Rumsey, Auckland.

REGIONAL ORGANISERS.—Under the constitution, the Council now have power to appoint, for a term of one year each, regional organisers in the districts for which it deems such organisers necessary. In making appointments, the Council will naturally be guided by representations made by members in such districts.