

AUTUMN BIRD COUNT IN MATATA BIRD SANCTUARY.

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While visiting the Matata Bird Sanctuary (Bay of Plenty) with the local district ranger, Mr. Ken Francis, of Whakatane, on May 6, 1952, an attempt was made to count all birds present in the two lagoons forming the sanctuary. A total of 1114 birds was recorded in the sanctuary proper belonging to 16 different species. Of rarer species three white herons were the main attraction. Following is a list of birds observed (cf. also table):

Dabchick (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*).—A total of five dabchicks was seen, but more were undoubtedly present.

Black Shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).—Six black shags were scattered over the mudflats in the western lagoon.

Pied Shag (*Phalacrocorax varius*).—Five pied shags were seen in the western lagoon, some of the birds were feeding.

Little Pied Shag (*Phalacrocorax brevirostris*).—Ten little pied shags were found on the mudflats in the western lagoon; several of the birds were "sunning" themselves with outspread wings.

White Heron (*Casmerodius albus*).—Three white herons were recorded, two in the eastern lagoon and one in the western lagoon.

Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*).—A bittern was seen wading in the water about ten feet from our vehicle. When we stopped the truck, the bittern adopted the characteristic camouflage position with upturned bill, a position which is of high value when the bird is hiding among reeds but which, when the bird was standing in low, open water, looked rather grotesque.

Paradise Duck (*Tadorna variegata*).—Two male paradise duck were seen on a mudflat in the western lagoon. They were standing a little away from grey duck and shoveler; no female paradise ducks could be located.

Grey Duck (*Anas poicilorhyncha*).—A total of 750 grey duck was counted in the sanctuary, of which 150 were found in the eastern lagoon, the remainder in the western lagoon. A great number of grey duck was shot by sportsmen during morning and evening flights in lagoons, meadows and paddocks around the sanctuary.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*).—Only six mallards were recorded with certainty, two in the eastern and four in the western lagoon.

Shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*).—A total of 60 shoveler was seen, all in the western lagoon. The shoveler were seen in small flocks (3, 5, 8, 14) among the grey ducks.

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*).—Fifty black swans were seen in the western lagoon. It was interesting to note that one of the swans sitting on the mudflat was apparently still under the impulse of breeding behaviour as it was working on building a small nest, taking up vegetation and piling it up in a heap behind it.

Banded Rail (*Hypotaenidia phillipensis*).—A banded rail was seen on mudflat near the road; disappeared into reeds.

Pukeko (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*).—Thirty pukekos were recorded, mainly in western lagoon, but higher numbers would undoubtedly be found in reed-beds surrounding lagoons.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*).—A total of 180 stilts was counted; this handsome bird was one of the conspicuous species due to its graceful flight, peculiar voice and extravagant walking.

Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*).—Two adult black-backed gulls were seen in western lagoon.

Red-billed Gull (*Larus novaeollandiae*).—Three red-billed gulls in western lagoon.

In addition to the above-mentioned birds observed in the sanctuary proper, the following species of birds were seen from the road along the sanctuary:

Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*).—Three kingfishers at eastern lagoon.
 Silveryeye (*Zosterops lateralis*).—Many silveryeyes in bushes along road and gardens.
 Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).—Common in Matata.
 Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*).—A few in bushes in gardens at Matata.
 Blackbird (*Turdus merula*).—A few in gardens at Matata.
 Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).—Very common in fields adjacent to sanctuary.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Small flocks seen in Matata.

Table showing species and numbers of birds recorded at Matata Bird Sanctuary, May 6, 1952. Dominance is percentage of total. Status refers to legal status: P, protected bird; G, game bird; and NP, not protected. It will appear that the sanctuary harboured 17.4% protected birds, 80.6% game species (waterfowl), and 2.0% non-protected birds.

	Number	Dominance %	Status
Dabchick	5	0.4	P
Black Shag	6	0.5	NP
Pied Shag	5	0.4	NP
Little Pied Shag	10	0.9	NP
White Heron	3	0.3	P
Bittern	1	0.1	P
Paradise Duck	2	0.2	G
Grey Duck	750	67.3	G
Mallard	6	0.5	G
Shoveler	60	5.4	G
Black Swan	50	4.5	G
Banded Rail	1	0.1	P
Pukeko	30	2.7	G
White-headed Stilt	180	16.2	P
Black-backed Gull	2	0.2	NP
Red-billed Gull	3	0.3	P
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ANOTHER RECORD OF HUDSONIAN GODWIT.—On 25/4/52, J. C. Davenport, M. B. Gill, S. C. Rutherford, V. M. Rutherford, G. E. Thomas and I visited Puketutu causeway and despite the continual drizzle had excellent views of a Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) both in flight and on the ground. We had halted the car near a high-tide roost which is frequently used by wrybills and in extremis by larger waders. The Hudsonian godwit was first noticed as with three knots it rose from among the wrybills, and circled low showing the characteristic wing and tail pattern. But especially noticeable also was the large area of dark feathering around the axillaries, a feature which I have not noted in other Hudsonian godwits that I have seen, though it is conspicuous enough in at least one of the Ellesmere specimens in Canterbury Museum. This black area is only likely to be visible to an observer who has an exceptionally good flank view of the bird in flight. It is possible that the extent and density of the black varies seasonally. On completing a short flight, the Hudsonian godwit alighted at the water's edge some yards apart from the other waders and gave us an opportunity to note the greyiness of the upper parts and how the even grey of the chest ended quite abruptly. On the ground this was a most helpful feature in differentiating the Hudsonian from the bar-tailed godwits which were dropping in on all sides of it. In size, it was scarcely as big as a male bar-tail. Several of these males were mildly pugnacious not only towards it but also inter se. Eventually it dozed off in the midst of them. It showed no trace of red colouring. This constitutes the third record of Hudsonian godwit in Manukau in recent years. Curiously enough, the last was also found on April 25, in 1949. (N.Z. Bird Notes, 3, 199.) Wader flocks were closely watched throughout the winter, but the Hudsonian godwit was not reported again.—R. B. Sibson, Auckland.