

## STILTS NESTING AT ARDMORE, 1952-53.

By A. F. Stokes, Ardmore.

Observation of nests and chicks of the stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) in the 1952-53 season was extremely difficult owing to the abnormally tall growth of grass and weeds. For this reason the delicate matter of fixing the beginning of incubation was not achieved.

### NEST No. 1.

1/9/52.—Nest; 4 eggs; female sitting. This bird, I am sure in my own mind, is the one that I have seen breeding every year from the beginning. She was of the same small size, nested in the same area, was consistently and exceptionally tame, and kept up distinct individual habits. If this is so she is at least nine years old to the spring of 1952.

14/9/52.—One chick running about. Three just hatched.

16/9/52.—Only three chicks.

5/10/52.—Three chicks ringed.

15/10/52.—All flying four or five yards. This gives a hatching to flying record of 31 days.

30/10/52.—At 6 a.m. a hawk was flying off with a chick which it dropped when I shouted. I removed the rings. The other two chicks were very frightened and although they could fly well, they hid in a gorse hedge all day, coming out at 6.45 p.m. The next day they still hid and I did not see them come out until 8.45 a.m. on 1/11/52, on which day they kept close to the hedge all the time. This seemed unusual behaviour for this species. These two chicks departed safely.

### NEST No. 2.

10/9/52.—Nest; 1 egg.

11/9/52.—Two eggs.

12/9/52.—Three eggs.

14/9/52.—Four eggs.

8/10/52.—Four eggs hatched and left nest. These were not subsequently traced.

### NEST No. 3.

17/9/52.—Nest; four eggs; on the farm of my neighbour, Mr J. Goertz.

29/9/52.—Three hatched.

1/10/52.—One hatched.

2/10/52.—Three chicks out of nest; one dead in nest.

3/10/52.—Family moved north along swamp. About ten days later they joined the other stilts over the fence on Mr. A. Stokes's farm. The chicks were probably lost before this.

### NEST No. 4.

13/10/52.—Nest; four eggs. Bird sitting. Hatched later, but chicks not seen.

### NEST No. 5.

24/11/52.—One adult with one small chick, and one with two.

16/12/52.—Chicks were brought to wet place by cowshed. Only one of these was reared and the family left on 1/2/53.

### NEST No. 6.

December, 1952.—Clutch hatched down by creek.

18/12/52.—Two chicks brought to cowshed.

11/1/53.—Chicks ringed.

13/1/53.—Both flew.

17/1/53.—Family departed.

Oddly enough, a young bird of the season came here on 9/4/53 and is still here on 26/4/53, alone, except that three adults paid a visit on 19/4/53.

Of the No. 3 nesting pair, one bird was noticed on 29/9/52 to have a ring on its right leg. With Mr. and Mrs. J. Goertz I viewed it on 30/9/52 at about one yard, the bird standing and flapping its wings at us furiously. The ring was silvery, but stained. Fearing injury, no attempt was made to

catch it and read the ring number. There is little doubt that the ring was one of those made and put on by F. Murray on 22/1/47. (See "New Zealand Bird Notes," Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 26.) Two chicks were ringed that day with white metal home-made rings numbered respectively 47-1 and 47-2, both on the right leg. No. 47-1 was much the larger chick and the present bird is a very large stilt so it is probably the first of the two ringed. If it is one of these it was nearly six years old when found. The ring was hard to see and the bird could have been present each season without its ring being noticed. All observers agreed that this was the fiercest stilt they had known. It would swoop wildly, throwing forward its "shoulder" to stiffen the wing for striking. This was not bluff for it actually struck with the wing. It could be, therefore, that a bird at the age of six years is in full vigour.

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**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.**—Miss G. di Menna, 23 Mardale Street, Roslyn, Dunedin, invites members to pass on to her information relating to the distribution of the brown creeper, yellowhead and whitehead. She would like to know what other native and introduced birds occur in the same habitat and if possible, an indication of the class of habitat, i.e., *Pinus insignis* plantation, *Podocarp* (native pine) bush, beech forest, manuka scrub 15ft. high, etc. Miss di Menna is doing research work on the brown creeper.

**REPORTS AND BULLETINS.**—The reprinting of the society's cyclostyled issues as "Reports and Bulletins, 1939-42" was made possible by the donations received. These do not appear in the accounts as donations as they were credited to the reprinting account together with orders for the reprint, but their receipt is here acknowledged with thanks, as follow:—I. A. E. Atkinson, A. G. Bagnall, B. D. Bell, M. J. S. Black, A. A. Boulton, P. C. Bull, W. J. Burns, J. C. Davenport, E. Dear (10/- each), C. A. Fleming £5, G. V. Gow 10/-, R. L. Grant 35/-, Mrs. J. Hickman, late E. W. Hursthouse, W. R. Marsden, D. Miller, G. J. H. Moon, L. W. McCaskill (10/- each), Miss N. Macdonald 12/6, Miss B. McDougall 10/-, H. R. McKenzie £2, D. Macmillan £3 10s., R. St. Paul £1, Mrs. M. A. Scott 10/-, T. Shout 10/-, R. B. Sibson 22/-, E. G. Turbott £1, C. K. Williams 10/-, R. A. Wilson 10/-, G. H. Young £1, J. A. Tubbs £1; total, £28/9/6.

**BEHAVIOUR OF OYSTERCATCHERS.**—On 3 September, 1952, I was on Taieri Beach, south of the river mouth; a strong nor'easterly was blowing in from the sea. Conspicuous against the white sand was a group of six black oystercatchers (*Haematopus unicolor*). From some distance, a friend and I saw one bird standing as if on guard and facing seawards, the other five all standing on one leg. The strong wind may have prevented us from being heard as we were able to approach within 30 yards of the birds, which seemed intent on their "game." As if on a given signal, the five birds danced round in a small circle; then they stood on both feet for a spell; then off again round and round on one leg. This was repeated several times and the birds took no notice of us. As it was so cold we had to move on and walked towards the group, and it was not until the sentinel bird turned its head and saw us that they flew off.—Mrs. A. C. Prentice, Dunedin.

**WHITE-FACED HERON INQUIRY.**—An inquiry is being made into the status of the white-faced heron (*Notophox novae-hollandiae*) and members are invited to submit sight records, localities where seen, field notes of any kind, and especially breeding records, to J. H. Sorensen, 25 Arawa Road, Hataitai, Wellington, E2.

A home-made aluminium ring bearing the inscription "W411" was taken recently from the leg of a white-eye caught near Clarkville, North Canterbury. The society has no record of the use of this ring and as convener of the Ringing Committee I would appreciate any information which might lead to the discovery of circumstances under which the bird was ringed.—P. Bull,