

LITTLE EGRET NEAR AUCKLAND AND IN FAR NORTH.

by H. R. McKenzie, Clevedon.

A little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) was found and identified on 11/10/53 at Karaka shellbank, on the east side of Manukau Harbour, by a party of O.S.N.Z. members, Misses N. Macdonald, D. N. Smith, A. B. Murray, H. M. Munro, and Messrs. F. Murray and the writer. The marks of identification as given by D. H. Brathwaite in the account of the first record of the species for New Zealand ("Notornis," Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 78) applied exactly. It was further noted that it seemed to have a less steep forehead than the large white heron (*Egretta alba*) and that its tail was shorter in proportion. Like the Napier bird, it carried no plumes. The bill was held somewhat downward and seemed very slightly decurved. It was alone on a shellbank when found. Later it was pursued to the south by two black-backed gulls until out of sight. Compared with the black-backed gulls it appeared a slim fragile bird, much lighter in body and shorter of wing.

It was again seen on the following occasions (presumably the same bird):—

14/10/53.—At Yates' Creek, south-west of Karaka shellbank, by R. B. Sibson, B. Chambers and S. Chambers. The tide was full and it was on a small weed-tufted islet in the company of c 40 stilts and 3 greenshanks. It preened industriously. In flight, it kept well up in the air.

25/10/53.—At Karaka shellbank and later at Weymouth by D. A. Urquhart and H. R. McKenzie. At each place is rested peacefully with black-backed gulls, among which it was not prominent.

28/10/53.—At Pike's Point, Onehunga, by R.B.S. It was first seen flying fairly high along the shore, then feeding without being molested among black-backed gulls in a dirty tidal creek.

1/3/54.—On a lava reef at the entrance to Tararata Creek, south-east of Onehunga Bridge by R.B.S. Seen standing on a rock at close range it was noted that the webs of its feet were a greenish yellow, considerably more coloured than when seen at Pike's Point on 28/10/53. It now carried pendent pectoral plumes but none were seen on the nape.

2/3/54.—At Tararata Creek, by J. Prickett. Close views obtained.

In 1953, at Rangaunu Bay, Northland, several observers reported two small white herons with ten or more large white herons. Mr. J. Prickett saw two small ones closely on July 17 (perhaps the same birds as those previously reported) and he is satisfied that they were the same species as the one he saw later at Tararata Creek, near Onehunga.

The Far North observation was made on 5/6/54 near the mouth of Rangaunu Bay, when a winter count of waders was being attempted by members J. Prickett, R. H. Michie, H. G. Warburton, D. G. McMillan and H.R.McK. The bird was espied by H. G. Warburton in a loose flock of blue heron on a sandy spit. The party advanced cautiously until the bill and legs were clearly visible so that identification was established. On 3rd and 4/6/54, seven large white herons were seen in the harbour but the little egret was not with them.

20/7/54.—One seen at Puhea Creek, near Onehunga Wharf, by R.B.S. Yellow soles of feet seen as it walked. It was also seen again by J.P. on 21/7/54.

These observations indicate that there is almost certainly more than one little egret in New Zealand. Should this species become established it will be a valuable addition to our avifauna.

Mr. B. Chambers, an Auckland member, writes: "I wish to make known to members of the society that I am in a position where I can obtain some good Japanese binoculars from an importing agent at wholesale prices. This agent has offered to obtain as many pairs as I require. I can place an order with this agent who would import them from Japan on the first ship. They normally take from 8 to 10 weeks to arrive. Replies should be made direct to me at Box 397, Auckland. The sizes are: 6x30, at £11/15/6; 8x30, £11/19/6; 7x50, £14/19/-; all plus sales tax.