

THE BIRDS OF MAYOR ISLAND.

By J. S. Edwards, Auckland.

These notes are the result of a few days at Mayor Island in late November 1952 with the Auckland University College Field Club. Some differences were noted in comparing the bird population of 1952 with Sladden's account in N.Z. Journal of Science and Technology 1926, and these are discussed. Possibly the most conspicuous part of bird activity at that time of year was the great bellbird chorus in the crater. Largely pohutukawa forest, the crater supports a great population of honey-eaters, certainly the largest in club members' experience.

The German wasp (*Vespula germanica*) was well established, and early pohutukawa blossoms in the crater were surrounded by clouds of them. Kiwis were neither heard nor seen. Numbers are given in this account only where an actual count was made.

PIED SHAG (*Phalacrocorax varius*).—This bird was noted by Sladden as having a colony at the northern end of Lake Aroarotamahine which was destroyed, but recolonised. It is fairly certain that pied shag is not breeding at this site, though pohutukawas fringing the lake are used as roosts.

WHITE-THROATED SHAG (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris*).—Breeding on margin of Lake Paritu in crater. Two pohutukawa trees contain 16 nests; 18 adults and 4 fledglings counted, c. 24 shags on the two lakes. The crop of a fledgling contained remains of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) which are found in Aroarotamahine, and which appear to be the sole diet of the shags.

BITTERN (*Botaurus stellaris poiciloptilus*).—A pair were put up in swamp between Aroarotamahine and Paritu, the male smaller and darker than the female. A search revealed no nest. A second female took flight near the margin of Paritu the same afternoon.

BROWN TEAL (*Anas castanea chlorotis*).—These delightful birds were seen at the south end of Aroarotamahine—a pair with four ducklings. There were 5-6 adults on the two lakes.

GREY DUCK (*Anas superciliosa superciliosa*).—Sladden records 20 pairs on the two lakes. None were present in 1952 on the lakes.

HARRIER (*Circus approximans gouldi*).—One present over crater.

BROWN QUAIL (*Synoicus ypsilophorus*).—Calls heard in Opo Valley from *Melicytus* scrub.

PUKEKO (*Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*).—Recorded from the swamp by Sladden. Neither seen nor heard 1952.

BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus dominicanus*).—Always three or four about Opo Bay. None in crater.

RED-BILLED GULL (*L. novae hollandiae scopulinus*).—Often flying about Opo Bay in twos or threes and about nesting site of terns on rock stack between Opo and North-west Bay. Both gulls are present in larger numbers than at Little Barrier.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN (*Sterna striata*).—About 200 about rock stack between Opo and North-west Bay, some nesting.

PIGEON (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*).—At least five birds in crater; probably many more. Also noted in Opo Valley.

N.I. KAKA (*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*).—Noted about Opo Bay, but very frequent in crater, where cries echoed about throughout the day. A family with three young on the crater tholoid noisily followed us along the edge of Aroarotamahine. At least five, on the north-east crater wall were seen to glide out from pokutukawas, sail up on upcurrents, and return to the same tree. The frequency of its call, and the number seen in the crater suggest that it has increased since 1926 when Sladden remarked, "this parrot is a rare bird."

PARAKEETS.—Parakeets were neither heard nor seen by our party or by Sladden.

SHINING CUCKOO (*Calchites lucidus lucidus*).—Heard frequently in crater. The uniform call in which the final descending note of the typical call was not added, suggests that the population was a small one.

MOREPORK (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*).—Three heard in crater and heard in Opo Bay where rodents about the buildings doubtless provide food.

KINGFISHER (*Halcyon sanctus vagans*).—Although kingfisher holes were often noted in the soft pumicy cliffs, not more than three were seen.

FANTAIL (*Rhipidura fuliginosa placabilis*).—Few in comparison with Little Barrier. They have not the shore feeding habits of those of Little Barrier.

NORTH ISLAND FERN BIRD (*Bowdleria punctata vealeae*).—This record is made from a single call heard in the crater swamp. While the typical a-tick seemed unmistakable, it cannot be regarded as certain.

GREY WARBLER (*Gerygone igata*).—Two or three at Opo Bay. Not noted in crater.

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus ericetorum*).—Three or four birds at Opo Bay, but none in crater.

BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*).—The blackbird was not seen during our visit.

PIPIT (*Anthus novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*).—Recorded by Sladden but not in 1952, and similarly the silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*).

BELLBIRD (*Anthornis melanura melanura*).—Noted about Opo Bay. Abundant in crater, where numerous young birds were seen. The magnificent gonging chorus started at 4.30 a.m., lasting till about 6 a.m. The crater walls echo and amplify the song, and kakas and frogs are stimulated to add to the chorus.

TUI (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*).—Considerably fewer in number than the bellbird. Pairs and threes were frequently noted flying high across the crater.

CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs gingleri*).—Three or four on North-west Bay track.

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*).—A small population about the buildings at Opo Bay.

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Eight to ten at Opo Bay. At least two pairs nesting on the Fern stack. Not noted in crater.

A group of petrel burrows was seen on the crater lip near Okawa Point. This was the only evidence of petrels on Mayor Island.

OCCURRENCE OF BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE.—I have to record the occurrence of a black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novae hollandiae*) at Himatangi, near Foxton. On January 1, 1955, I was motor-ing past a clump of macrocarpas at the end of Lake Road between the main road and the sea when a bird about the size of a starling flew before me and settled on the grass. Its undulating wavy flight marked it as a new bird and I stopped the car and walked over to it. It allowed me to approach within a few yards and I observed it for some time actively chasing and capturing insects on the grass. Its colour agreed most with the juvenile stage as recorded by Oliver. Not being strikingly marked it could easily pass unobserved, and I consider it probable it occurs more frequently than recorded. Beside the four occurrences noted by Oliver and one by E. G. Turbott in *Notornis* of April, 1954, page 253, I saw one in our garden at Bulls many years ago. To any bird lover, its wavy flight marks it at once.—Robert A. Wilson, Bulls.