

4. A high stoat population does not necessarily mean a low bird population.
5. The stoat may well be more of an asset as a rat destroyer than a liability as a bird destroyer.
6. The time for an exhaustive study of the diet of rats and mustelids in the New Zealand bush is long overdue.

#### STOATS and WESTLAND PETRELS

A rather higher than normal density of stoats was noticed in the areas where the Westland Petrel nests. It will be interesting to attempt to ascertain whether the bird has diminished in numbers in recent years, and whether or not it does so in the future. Also, this is one case where the rat-stoat-bird relationship is not complicated by competition for food between the rat and the bird.

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### SHORT NOTES

#### TERRITORY THREAT DISPLAY OF THE BLACK OYSTERCATCHER

(*Haematopus unicolor unicolor*)

On 5/1/55, while I was watching a pair of black oystercatchers and their chick on the southern end of Butterfield's Beach, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, another black oystercatcher landed in their territory. The resulting threat display was very interesting, especially as the birds ceased calling and flying around me, although I was only a few feet from the chick, and they had already lost one of their brood to a dog the day before.

Number one of the pair ran to number two with head held noticeably high and with the beak roughly parallel to the ground. Number two adopted a position in which the bill almost touched the ground and the shoulders of the wings were hunched well above the back. As soon as number one was beside number two, it adopted number two's attitude; then, following a slight pause, they both started to run, side by side, in step, and in this strange position — bills almost touching the ground, and with the shoulders hunched, while all the time uttering shrill cries. After several 'flat-out' chases around the beach in this position, during which the pair were only a few yards behind the intruder, the lone bird was at last driven from the beach. The chased bird did not take up any strange attitude like the pair, nor did it make any attempt to stay on the beach or utter any cry when being chased away. The pair, having satisfied themselves that the bird would not return, resumed aggressive behaviour towards me, the chick having remained frozen during the interlude.

It would be interesting to know which sex ran to the other at the beginning, as there was no hesitation as to what positions to adopt. The display took place just after a cool shower and there was a cool, moderate breeze with a weak sun and dull clouds.

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