

and a determination to make use of them for the night and until the weather cleared next morning.

W. M. BURROWS

GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) COLLECTING NESTING MATERIAL

On the fine afternoon of 21/1/55 a goldfinch was seen gathering nesting material from under the eave of a shed. Along the wall of this building was trained an apricot tree. Flying to a small branch, the bird reached forward to seize a mouthful of brown, silky spider's nest which was firmly attached to the rough surface of the wall. Tugging with all its might, it gradually pulled the silk away till its head was back to the normal starting position. But still the silk held firmly to the wall. Wits its head raised high, it continued to pull, throwing its weight outward till it was lying horizontal to the branch — back down and belly up. The silk still held. It then swung downward till it could pull no further. Then, fluttering its wings, it gave a jump outward so that its whole weight plus the wing beats jerked most of the silk clear. It flew away trailing some six inches of the gossamer to its nest in a tree nearby. All this took about a minute, during which the cock bird (presumably) sat on a nearby branch watching and calling. When the hen flew, he followed her to the nest. The observer, looking out from a netting window unseen in the darkened interior of the shed, was within two feet of the hen bird and thus had a very good view. The process was repeated till the supply of material was exhausted.

W. M. BURROWS

BEHAVIOUR OF BUSH HAWK (*F. novaeseelandiae*) IN WELLINGTON

On 18/5/55 my sister, Miss Z. A. Wilkin, placed a cage containing one yellow and one blue budgerigar on a chair near a closed upstairs window overlooking a gully, which has a little creek at the bottom and many trees along the sides, and is situated between Kelburn Park and The Terrace, near the centre of Wellington City. The weather was fine and warm. Suddenly at 4 p.m. a dark brown, very graceful hawk with fine white eyebrows and with the under-tail and thighs flecked with cream-beige, appeared fluttering at the window trying to get at the budgerigars through the glass. Miss Wilkin opened the window and the hawk then tried to get at the budgerigars by attempting to settle on her arm and shoulder, and she had to push it outside again. The hawk was very gentle and quite noiseless, even the wing beats being inaudible. The budgerigars fluttered around in their cage and one was so terrified that it fainted on the bottom of the cage, but came round again later. When the window was shut again the hawk settled on a tree close outside and returned nine times, fluttering about the window as if trying to gain entrance. It remained close by for about twenty minutes, during which time Miss Wilkin obtained a camera and attempted to photograph it. When Dr R. A. Falla, Director of the Dominion Museum, was consulted about the hawk, he said that the above was a good description of a young Bush Hawk.

FRANCIS E. WILKIN, Wellington

SHARP-TAILED (Siberian Pectoral) SANDPIPER NEAR INVERCARGILL IN MAY

On 17/5/55 we noticed a small wader feeding beside one of the small pools which were dotted about the floor of what was once L. Hawkins, near Invercargill. As it tended to stay by itself and showed no desire to consort with a scattered flock of Banded Dotterels (*C. b. b. bicinctus*), we had little difficulty in watching it for as long as we liked at about the distance of a chain; and as soon as it was seen in a favourable light we were able to identify it as a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*C. acuminata*) in breeding dress. So richly

was it marked on the chest that we had to make certain that it was not an American Pectoral Sandpiper (*C. melanotos*); but against this were the crescentic marks on the flanks and the gradual fading-out of the gorget, which in the American species ends abruptly. Other points which we noted in favour of its being *C. acuminata* were (a) no yellow was visible at the base of the bill, (b) the legs were greenish-yellow rather than yellow, (c) its call when it was flushed was softer than the distinctive 'kriek' of *C. melanotos*.

The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper has been obtained several times at L. Ellesmere, but its discovery at L. Hawkins extends its known southward range by some 200 miles. According to Wall (*Emu* 53, 83-84) it is a regular visitor to southern Tasmania, but has not been recorded in winter; and much further north, according to Hindwood and Hoskin (*Emu* 54, 244), 'they are absent from the Sydney district from early May until the first week or two of August.' It is therefore all the more remarkable that this bird should have been found near Invercargill in mid-May. There is one other winter record of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in New Zealand. One was seen in July 1949 in the Firth of Thames by Mr H. R. McKenzie, who by good chance arrived in Invercargill on the day when we found the bird at L. Hawkins and was able to see it a few hours later.

R. B. SIBSON, D. A. URQUHART

TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

One of my colleagues here, Mr G. A. Knox, has received a letter from a South African worker who requests 'fleas of penguins and other sea birds of the southern ocean' and who 'recently published a review largely based on material collected by ANARE.'

He goes on to say: 'Very much more material is required if we are to understand the distribution problems and I appeal to you for help. The fleas are mostly found in nests, burrows, etc., of birds and occur in quite large numbers.'

I wonder if you would be so kind as to put a small note in *Notornis* about this so that perhaps someone who has the opportunity of sending material may do so. I know penguin burrows are good here and I imagine petrel burrows would yield interesting results. The address is:

Dr Botha de Meillon

The South African Institute for Medical Research
Hospital Street
Johannesburg
South Africa

E. W. DAWSON

Department of Zoology,

Canterbury University College, Christchurch C.1.

Sir,

I am making an investigation into the aerodynamics of various types of birds, and would be most grateful if any of your members could make some measurements for me. I particularly need measurements of Diving Petrels, Australian Gannet, and Albatrosses, but measurements of any other birds would be welcome, especially those of sea-birds. I give below details of what I want.

Would you be so kind as to bring this to the attention of any of your members who would be willing to help me?

JOHN BARLEE

Royal Naval College,
Dartmouth, Devon, England.

Measurements required

1. *Weight* — as accurately as possible.