

slopes gradually in a series of sandstone ledges: and the pools left in the hollows as the tide falls would seem to be an ideal tattler habitat, resembling that at Long Reef near Sydney, N.S.W. It should be mentioned that both H.R.McK. and D.A.U. have met with the Siberian Tattler at Parengarenga.

R. B. Sibson

PIED STILT SWIMS THE CHANNEL

While the potential swimming ability of waders is well known, such observations are seldom published to assist the student of bird behaviour.

With this in mind, I record a Pied Stilt (*H. leucocephalus*) which buoyantly and unhurriedly swam across a watercourse about twenty feet wide at Ahuriri Lagoon, Napier, on 24/7/55.

It had been onshore with some other stilts which were cavorting excitedly, pursuing one another and leaping vigorously about. This group behaviour may perhaps account for the otherwise unnecessary swim.

B. H. Heather

WHITE-FACED HERON NESTING IN NORTH AUCKLAND

A pair of White-faced Herons (*Notophyx novaehollandiae*) frequented the eastern end of the Kaipara Flats from early June 1955 until early August.

On 21 July the pair were found to be nesting 35 feet from the ground in a 40ft kahikatea tree, one of a clump of about fifty trees. The nest was a very flimsy structure consisting of a mere handful of sticks, and Mr S. G. Smith, the owner of the land, had discovered the nest by finding two smashed eggs and one whole egg on the ground beneath the tree. During this and subsequent visits the heron remained sitting on the apparently empty nest while I was below the tree.

The heron continued to sit and considerably enlarged the nest structure and laid a fresh clutch, but on 14 August, accompanied by Mr J. Prickett, we found on the ground below the nest two eggs which had obviously been sucked but not smashed. There was no sign of the herons, but we discovered a White-backed Magpie's nest fifty yards away, and Mr Smith said that he had seen the magpies attacking the herons on several occasions.

There appears to be strong evidence to show that this attempt at nesting by the herons was frustrated by the depredations of the magpie. I also have photographic evidence to show that magpies have destroyed the young of both tui and pipit.

G. J. H. Moon

[This is the first record of the breeding of the White-faced Heron in northern New Zealand. During the breeding season of 1955, White-faced Herons were reported from two other localities in Kaipara, but breeding was not proved.—Ed.]

BLACK-FRONTED TERNS (*C. albobristatus*) IN KAIPARA

On 23/4/55 we were driving along the northern shores of the Kaipara Harbour when we came to a little bay called Tangaihi and saw a number of White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*) sitting on the piles of a derelict jetty in company with sixteen smaller terns. As some of these were sitting directly in front of the White-fronted Terns, we estimated their size as about three-

quarters that of the larger terns. The top and sides of their heads were greyish with white throat. The upper feathers of wings and body were medium grey, showing very distinctly dark against their neighbours. When they flew we saw that the upper tail feathers were white, and the tail made a hollow curve about an inch deep. The breasts seemed very pale grey or off-white, but at no time did we see these birds face on — always a sideways view, and then back view when they flew away. They showed no signs of flying away, only changing position now and again, until the tide changed. (The tide was fully in when we first saw them and they were just resting and a few preening.) Their legs and beaks were tomato or orange coloured with the exception of two or more, which were dark. A few of them were sitting on individual piles and crosspieces, but quite a number were intermingled with the White-fronted Terns, which numbered thirty-four, and all seemed to be contented to be together.

In company with these birds were twenty-two Oyster-catchers, both black and smudgy.

A. and J. Prickett

[There seems to be little doubt that these were Black-fronted Terns, which had moved northwards in the autumn from the South Island. Stragglers have occasionally been reported on the Auckland coast, but the only comparable record of a flock is of five seen at Muriwai on 10/3/40 (*Notornis* 3, p. 11).—Ed.]

MYNAS DESTROY YOUNG STARLINGS

At Wanstead, Waipukurau, in 1946, my husband and I heard a great commotion at a starling nest in the eaves of a building. Two mynas pulled out a large partly-feathered chick from under the roofing iron into the open spouting. They each gripped a wing of the chick with their bills and flew together with it for twenty to twenty-five yards and dropped it to the ground from a height of fifteen to twenty feet. They did not alight, but left the chick alive and dazed. This performance was repeated until three more chicks had been disposed of in the same manner. All died very soon. The parent starlings made a great fuss but did not attack the mynas, which completely ignored them.

Mention has been made in *Notornis* of mynas taking young birds from nests, but I have not heard before of two birds combining to carry one chick when it was too large for a single bird to handle.

(Mrs) R. P. Stoddart

WILD DUCKLINGS DROPPING FROM NEST IN TREE

On 19/9/55 I had been chopping the rotten sap off some totara logs and was just going to stop to boil the billy when I heard the loud quacking of a duck which sounded to be coming up the bulldozed road towards me, but on looking more closely I saw that she was coming through the bush. I could also hear something dropping down out of a matai tree and for a moment thought it was one of the local pair of kaka pulling off bark or rotten wood. I then heard a rustling sound in a whara-whara (*Astelia banksii*) and saw that it was the little ducklings scrambling out of the nest and dropping to the ground like bits of bark falling. They just seemed to crash-land, scramble to their feet and head to where the old Grey Duck was calling a few feet away. The nest would be forty feet from the ground, but two heavily leaved woolly punga grew directly underneath and broke the fall of the little ones.

I was only about half a chain away when they were coming down and I