

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

am sure of eight, but I think there were ten. When they had all landed and flocked round her, she headed down through the bush with them, gently quacking all the time. I thought she would take them on to the open bush road, but instead she kept on a parallel with the road about half a chain in the bush. The nearest creek would be ten chains away and in the direction she was travelling there would fifteen or twenty chains to the first water. I tried to follow them as they made their way through the bush, but did not want to excite the old bird so moved away and left them to it. In a matter of ten minutes they had covered about five chains, over roots, under logs, and so on, so that they would soon cover a fair distance even in such rough going.

I do not know whether or not she carried any down from the tree to start them off. I had a close look round the punga and on the ground, but could not find any that had been injured in the fall. Although so small they must be very 'tough'. One seldom has the opportunity of seeing such things happen and it is a very pleasant way of getting to know the ways of the birds.

R. St Paul, Minginui

RELATIONSHIPS OF WANDERING ALBATROSS WITH BLACK-BACKED GULLS AND NELLIES IN LAMBTON HARBOUR

A nervous reaction of the Wandering Albatross (*D. exulans*) to Black-backed Gulls (*L. dominicanus*) is described in *Notornis* Vol. 5, 132; but it is apparent from further studies about the docks at Lambton Harbour, Wellington, that the Wandering Albatross is not as a rule disturbed by the presence of Black-backed Gulls, only evincing nervousness occasionally. This is shown by the following records.

First, an albatross and several gulls were observed resting together on the water on 25/3/54. The gulls, picking up food while swimming about, were chased by the albatross. In addition, an old albatross was seen swimming about on 7/7/54 amid a crowd of gulls; the two species associated amicably. A young adult albatross was seen on 14/3/55 to take wing and fly into a large party of feeding gulls, and again during May 1955 a bird was seen on the water with gulls swimming nearby and showing no nervous reaction, with some more in flight close by.

A second example of nervousness was seen, however, during April 1954. An albatross was seen sitting on the water close to a ship which was casting out slops. The albatross kept away from the slops until a crowd of gulls hovering over it settled on the water. The albatross then dashed amongst them to get its share of something to eat.

In *Notornis* 5, 132, I also mentioned the domination of a Nelly (*M. giganteus*) by a Wandering Albatross. More recently, on 11/4/54, I watched a young adult albatross which found a Nelly feeding on a piece of floating discarded fat. The albatross drove the Nelly off and swallowed the fat. However, its domination of the Nelly was not complete, as the latter swam around nearby with wings outspread while the albatross fed. This albatross later chased some more Nellites off some other carrion. Finally, on 27/5/54, three Nellites and one albatross were seen clustered round something edible floating in the water. The albatross left after it had failed to drive the Nellites away. They were then joined by a second albatross, but it likewise could not displace them.

H. L. Secker, Wellington