

## ANTING BY A BLACKBIRD

On 25/12/55 I noticed an agitated female blackbird on our lawn. With all her feathers ruffled she poked her beak under one wing, then pecked at the lawn, then under the wing again; rapidly four to six times this was repeated, first under one wing and then for a similar number of times under the other wing. I do not know how long she had been performing these movements, but I watched for fifteen minutes before going closer to investigate. The blackbird ran under the hedge and I found an army of ants moving about on an area a little over a foot in diameter on the exact spot where she had been standing. I had heard about 'anting', but until I saw the ants on the ground I could not understand her 'antics'.

Marie P. Buchler, Lower Hutt

## BROWN BOOBY OFF CAVALLIS

This forms a belated footnote to P. A. S. Stein's recent paper on the Brown Booby in New Zealand (*Notornis*, 6: 157), and may serve to substantiate further his suggestions.

On 2/1/55 Messrs J. C. Burland, R. R. Moynihan and I saw at intervals and at varying distances, with the aid of x10 binoculars, a bird subsequently proved to be an adult Brown Booby (*C. leucogaster*). The bird was flying off the north coast of Kahangaro Island in the Cavalli group, Northland.

Field notes agree conclusively with available literature, save that the transverse chocolate bar on the underwing, mentioned by Stein (*Notornis*, 5: 165), is lacking in both field notes and sketches. Nor was the facial colour noted. The bill was horn-yellow and the feet, glimpsed once, were thought to be bright orange-yellow.

An initial impression that the bird was smaller, especially in its wing-span, than a Gannet (*S. serrator*), was readily confirmed when both were in proximity.

B. D. Heather

## WELCOME SWALLOW AT FAREWELL SPIT

A Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), the fourth recorded occurrence in New Zealand, was seen by me on 25/11/55. It was flying near and over the lake on the property of Mr S. W. Freeman, Puponga, whose farm immediately adjoins the base of Farewell Spit.

The swift irregularity of the bird's silent bat-like flight made binoculars virtually useless, but sufficient details for positive identification were seen after a lengthy watch.

A small bird, with rounded head, streamlined body, obviously forked tail and arcuate swept-back wings, the upper surface seemed sometimes blue-black, sometimes brown, but the truth appears to be that the back is blue-black and the wings brown. (1) Under-surface, including wing, whitish. Breast, throat and somewhere on the head, reddish-buff. Rump colour was not noted, but there was an occasional impression of white on the tail. A fascinating bird and one which could make an attractive addition to our fauna.

When I revisited the area together with Mr Rex Freeman on the 27th and 28th the bird could not be found.

Reference was made to: (1) D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell, *The Birds of Western Australia*, 1951, and (2) M. Sharland, *Tasmanian Birds and How to Identify Them*, 1945.

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