

Spotted Shag (*Stictocarbo punctatus*). 29/11/53. 41 adults flying. Two nests intact, one with two almost fully grown chicks. 21/2/54. c. 130 adults flying around the island. 21/9/54. 6 adults. 30/10/54. c. 45 adults. Three nests.

White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*). 29/11/53. Nests 112. Chicks 12. One nest contained three eggs, 12 nests two eggs each. During the winter very few terns were about. They were again plentiful by early October.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). A pair bred in a short rocky burrow.

There is very little soil except a few pockets of rotted down guano and I could not find any petrel burrows. On 21/9/54 at least eight seals were seen and two geckos were found among the rocks.

A. T. WIGHTMAN

WAX-EYES TAKEN AS FOOD BY WHITE HERON

It is no uncommon thing to find small birds so gorged with food that they are temporarily unable to fly properly. I have more than once handled Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) in this condition. Wax-eyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) will glut themselves with mutton fat which in Westland is commonly kept in large tins in timber yards. Some years ago a White Heron (*E. alba*) used to frequent one such timber yard near Whataroa. It would stand quietly by the tin, seizing and swallowing those Wax-eyes whom gluttony had rendered incapable of escaping. This continued for some months, the Wax-eyes never seeming to learn that the White Heron was their enemy.

J. G. PENNIKET

HARRIER ATTACKING BITTERN

The degree to which the Harrier (*C. approximans*) preys on other birds has been the subject of much controversy, so the following note is pertinent. On 8/11/55 I observed a Bittern (*B. poiciloptilus*) in flight under attack by a Harrier at Lake Hayes. The Harrier dived at the Bittern continually and gradually forced it to lose height. At each swoop it struck with its talons, but the Bittern parried with its bill every time. The fight lasted for ten minutes until the Bittern made the shore-line and escaped.

M. M. SMALL

'CRESTED' BELLBIRDS

While investigating the alleged appearance of a Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) in this (Rotorua) area, several reports of the occurrence of a strange bird have come to my notice.

Three boys who visited the Auckland Museum during the Christmas holidays, after viewing the specimens of Bulbul on exhibition there, declared to the attendant that they had seen the same bird near Lake Rotoiti. Unfortunately Mr Turbott was away at the time of their visit, otherwise the matter would doubtless have been cleared up then and there. One of the boys left a Rotorua address with the attendant, which proved to be incorrect, and all subsequent efforts to trace the lad at Mr Turbott's request have proved futile. I have little doubt, however, that the supposed Bulbul was none other than a Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) wearing a temporary head adornment.

During last November and early December when the flax (*Phormium*) is in bloom, the nectar-loving Bellbird pays much attention to this plant, a fact that is generally well known. In the process of extracting the nectar from the flax flowers, the bird's head comes into contact with the dark-red — almost purple — pollen, and on withdrawing the bill a certain amount of nectar adheres to the inside walls of the 'petals'. The next bird visiting the same flower contacts both pollen and nectar, and on withdrawing the head, the feathers of forehead and crown are thus raised, giving the impression of a crest or tuft on the bird's head. I have noticed the same effect on the heads of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*). The act of withdrawing the bill bends the head feathers forward, and these being dusted with pollen and smeared with nectar — a combination