

S.I. KOKAKO (*Callaeas c. cinerea*). Reported as heard on the ridge between Two-mile and Three-mile Creeks, Mokihinui. (H.W.J.)

## ANNUAL LOCALITY REPORTS

### MIRANDA COAST, FIRTH OF THAMES

Christmas, 1955, was followed by three weeks of strong easterly and north-easterly winds; on result of which was that more 'tubenoses' than usual were found ashore in the Firth of Thames.

FAIRY PRION. 1 juv. freshly dead 15/1/56. 2 fragmentary on 25/2/56.

BULLER'S SEARWATER. 1 dead on 15/1/56, 1 dead on 12/7/56.

SOOTY SHEARWATER. 1 dead on 12/2/56.

TASMANIAN MUTTONBIRD. 1 dead on 12/2/56.

WHITE-FACED HERON. One or two birds have been present throughout the year. It is expected that this heron will soon be breeding, if it has not done so already. Sample records, 2 on 2/12/55 and 2 on 27/12/55, 2 on 17/6/56.

BLACK SWAN. Not common. 27 on 17/6/56 is the biggest count so far.

SHOVELER. 2 males on 8/10/55; 2 on 27/2/56 on the pools and a pair on Waitakaruru Creek on 17/6/56.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER. 122 on 25/8/55; 40+ on 25/10/55; 58 on 4/12/55 was probably the total of summerers. As in Manukau the first migrants are back by the New Year. 99 on 3/1/56; c. 240 on 15/1/56; c. 500 on 19/2/56. A peak of c. 830 was reached in mid-March; but some of these evidently moved on, for the wintering total was c. 600.

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER. One between 25/10/55 and 27/2/56; two between 21/4/56 and 9/9/56.

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER. This does not appear to be a regular summer visitor to the Miranda Coast. None was recorded during the 1955-56 season; but N.M. found two early return-migrants on 8/9/56.

BANDED DOTTEREL. On the Kaiaua-Miranda coast, where a few years ago 20-25 pairs bred, it is now doubtful if there are 10 breeding pairs. 25/8/55, 9 birds seen, one nest with one egg found; 8/10/55, 6 pairs located, 5 'loose' birds, 1 chick seen; 4/12/55, census 29 birds, 2 pairs still nesting; 18/12/55, 2 small and 1 large chick ringed; new nest at Miranda creek; 27/12/55, a flock of 51 including 26 young of the season; one nest with 3 eggs; 2/1/56, not plentiful, those seen being young and 2 pairs of late-breeders with chicks; 15/1/56, c. 20 on the Waitakaruru mudflats; 27/2/56, 143 on Miranda lagoon; c. 60 on 31/3/56 near Waitakaruru; 18/3/56, 18; 21/4/56, c. 20 in lush waterlogged grass; 6/5/56, Kaiaua-Miranda, none.

N.Z. DOTTEREL. 25/8/55, 1 pair at Kaiaua and 1 pair at White Bridge; 8/10/55, 5 at Kaiaua; during the summer odd unmated birds moved up and down the coast; no successful breeding reported; but on 18/3/56, 6 at Kaiaua and 1 at Miranda; 17/6/56, 5 (3 coloured) at Kaiaua.

WRYBILL. 303 on 8/10/55. Most of these evidently left, so that only 40-50 summered, e.g. 38+ on 25/10/55, 54 on 6/11/55 and 43 on 4/12/55, 108 on 27/12/55. By 2/1/56 they had increased to c. 330, and by 15/1/56 to 1,150+. 2,000+ on 27/2/56. Winter census, c. 2,600 all in one flock, checked by several observers on 17/6/56. 850+ on 26/8/56; c. 500 on 9/9/56; c. 330 on 13/10/56.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW. 2 on 4/12/55, 18/12/55 and 27/12/55; 3 on 2/1/56; 4 on 18/3/56; 2 on 31/3/56; 2 on 13/6/56.

ASIATIC WHIMBREL. 1 on 4/12/55; 10 on Miranda lagoon on 2/1/56, believed to be the biggest flock so far recorded in New Zealand; 1 on 13/6/56; 3 on 9/9/56.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. Some thousands throughout the summer. Census, 6,000+ on 4/12/55. Only c. 150 were present when a winter census was taken on 17/6/56.

ASIATIC BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (v. *Notornis*, 6, 24-242 and 7, 58-59). Additional sighting, 1 in winter plumage on 21/4/56.

TURNSTONE. 2 on 8/10/55; 7 on 25/10/55; 15 on 2/1/56; 16 on 3/1/56 and 8/1/56; the biggest flock so far recorded on the Miranda coast, 12 on 15/1/56; 2 on 21/4/56; 1 wintered with Wrybills, with which it was seen on 17/6/56, 26/8/56 and 9/9/56.

KNOT. Between early October and March there were perhaps 8,000 on this coast; and on 31/3/56 there were still 2,000+, of which very few were not red or reddening, wholly grey birds being hard to find. There were still 1,000+ on 21/4/56, but among them were very few deeply red birds. Wintering numbers were unusually small — 19 on 17/6/56, 42 on 12/7/56, c. 30 on 26/8/56, c. 32 on 9/9/56.

SIBERIAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER. 3 (?) on 9/10/55; 6 on 25/10/55; 18 on 4/12/55; 16 on 21/12/55; 17 on 27/12/55; 19 on 15/1/56; 8 on 19/2/56; 10 on 27/2/56; 7 on 18/3/56.

AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER. 1 on 21/4/56 with Wrybills near Waitakaruru. None identified for certain this summer on the usual pools, though one was suspected on 25/10/55 before it flew away, and two were suspected on 15/1/56.

CURLEW SANDPIPER. 1 on 25/10/55, still showing distinct signs of red nuptial plumage; 5 on 4/12/55, 2/1/56, 15/1/56 and 19/2/56, when 3 were still pale, one was reddening and one well reddened; one in grey on 21/4/56.

RED-NECKED STINT. 1 on 8/10/55; 3 on 4/12/55, 2/1/56 and 15/1/56; 5 on 19/2/56; 4 on 21/4/56, all assuming breeding dress and one with a very red neck.

PIED STILT. Winter census 26/6/55, 1,971. 8/10/55, 11 nests seen; but c. 340 birds were counted, non-breeders by far outnumbering breeders. 21/4/56, few Stilts on mudflats or beaches; but 1,000+ in lush flooded paddocks. April rainfall was more than ten inches. Census 17/6/56, 1,557. 12/7/56, exceptionally early nesting at Miranda, nests found with 4, 3 and 2 eggs, also 4 empty nests. 9/9/56, some young already strong on the wing.

[POMARINE SKUA. On 18/3/56 a dark skua, with a white and yellow collar, frightened the gulls and chased a Caspian Tern over the shellspit at the mouth of Miranda Creek. Hardly any white showed in the wing. The tail, which was well seen, had neither the pointed central feathers of *parasiticus*, nor the characteristic twisted feathers of *pomarinus*, in breeding plumage. It was a robustly built skua; and if an example of *parasiticus*, must have been a very large one. It is safest to leave it in square brackets.]

ARCTIC SKUA. One or two are often present when the White-fronted Terns are nesting. Late dates: 1 on 6/5/56, 1 on 17/6/56 (v. *Notornis*, 7, p. 63).

BLACK-BACKED GULL. C. 50 pairs breed, viz. 21 nests, no eggs at Kaiaua, 25/10/55; 26 nests with eggs at Wrybill Reach, 4/12/55; 3 isolated pairs nested at Miranda.

BLACK-BILLED GULL. 350+ on 25/8/55; c. 200 on 8/10/55; none to be seen by 25/10/55; c. 50 had returned by 19/2/56; 262 on 6/2/56; c. 400 on 12/7/56.

CASPIAN TERN. Not known to breed; but there is an influx after the breeding season. Winter census figures: 123 on 26/6/55, 128 on 17/6/56.

TERN (species?). During recent years very small Terns have been frequenting the Firth of Thames, but, as far as is known, not breeding. They do not appear to be Fairy Terns (*S. nereis*) as none has yet been seen with a wholly yellow beak. A detailed account will be published in a future issue of *Notornis*. Sample records: 5 on 4/12/55; 13 on 2/1/56; 11 on 21/4/56; 1 on 17/6/56.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN. Seldom numerous in winter. Census, 51 on 26/6/55; by October some birds may be prospecting past nesting places, e.g. 20 at Wrybill Reach on 8/10/55 and c. 1,000 at Kaiaua on 13/10/56. The '55-'56 breeding season was disastrous. Two shellbanks were chosen as nesting places: (a) Finschi Spit, 4/12/55, c. 460 birds and c. 170 eggs. 18/12/55, colony washed out, c. 400 birds and c. 20 new eggs; most of these were also washed out by the exceptionally high tides about the New Year. (b) Wrybill Reach. 4/12/55, 8 birds present. 27/12/55, c. 400 pairs, all but four nests contained single eggs. 15/1/56, Not a single Tern present; colony washed out. 19/2/56, in a group of 80 birds there was only one juvenile; c. 250 on 6/5/56 was a big increase on most autumn counts.

#### MANUKAU (a) UPPER MANUKAU

GANNET. 28/6/56. 5 above the bridge.

PIED SHAG. Usually a few near the bridge.

REEF HERON. 28/6/56. 1 in Puhea Ck.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER. Summering at Tararata Ck. was proved for the third successive year, after numbers had steadily declined in the spring, e.g. 72 on 8/9/55; 42 on 24/9/55; 24 on 7/10/55; 17 on 21/10/55; 15 on 8/11/55; 16 on 24/12/55. Apparently missing in autumn and most of winter. 64 on 22/8/56; 50 on 13/9/56.

WRYBILL. Some appear at Harania Ck. after mid-summer, e.g. 4 on 4/1/56, 15 on 12/1/56, 23 on 6/2/56. A big flock of 450+ on 27/4/56 had almost certainly come from Puketutu. 1 on 9/8/56.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. As usual few if any Godwits were present during the winter; c. 300 at Tararata Ck. on 24/9/55 may have been recent arrivals; c. 2,000 on 2/12/55. 2,400+ on 4/1/56. Most had gone by the end of March; c. 20 on 27/4/56. On 14/9/56 some hundreds of Godwits suddenly appeared in the evening at Harania Ck. and flew round excitedly, but would not settle. They may have been returning migrants.

KNOT. Some were often present with Godwits between November and March, c. 1,000 on 4/1/56. None throughout winter. A few on 14/9/56.

TURNSTONE. 1 on 27/4/56, at Harania Ck., the first record for this area.

STILT. c. 1,200 at Harania Ck. on 11/8/55 was an unusually big number for the season; 300+ on 24/9/55; c. 30 on 13/10/55; c. 60 on 29/11/55; c. 600 on 29/12/55; 1,000+ on 4/1/56; 1,500+ on 6/2/56. Winter census of whole area 2,340 on 8/7/56. A nearly black Stilt, but with some white on the face and belly, was seen near the bridge on 31/3/56.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN. On 28/12/55 after an interval of nine months a W.W.B.T. in eclipse plumage was again found at Harania Ck., and it stayed in this locality throughout the autumn and winter of 1956, being reported two or three times every month by several observers till 9 August. By 6/2/56 it was obviously assuming nuptial dress, and by 16/2/56 this moult was nearly completed. It was still in magnificent plumage in August, though the upper wing surface was noticeably paling, and the moult into eclipse plumage had evidently begun. This is evidently the same bird as was reported in Upper Manukau in 1954 (*Notornis*, 6, 159-160).