

Little Egret at Manukau was still there, and by this time there were two Little Egrets at the sand-bar of Rangaunu Bay. The most reasonable assumption of the origin of these birds is Australia, and I suggest their presence as a likely clue in unravelling the mysterious comings and goings of the White Heron flocks on Rangaunu Bay.

There are many people to whom thanks are due for the different ways that they have helped with the matter for this report. Will they please accept the thanks of Mr D. Brathwaite and myself.

NORTH ISLAND NATIVE THRUSH OR PIO-PIO **(*Turnagra capensis tanagra*)**

By G. E. SOPP

The Native Thrush, or Pio-Pio, is reliably reported once to have been common in bush country from Waikaremoana far up towards East Cape. From reports from further north and from my own experience I am satisfied that it still occupies much the same range, though in small numbers and reduced bush habitat. The retiring habits of this bird, its fondness for thick cover and its similarity to the Song Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*) make identification difficult. It appears to sing only rarely. An alarm call is very frequently used, but only too often comes from a thicket and does not lead to a sight record.

In many years of working and hunting in the bush I have caught glimpses of thrushes, usually flying low and away from me, some of which I now consider could have been the Pio Pio. The first that I found to be certainly different was at Hopuruahine, Lake Waikaremoana, in 1938. I had followed a deer off the road into the bush when I clearly saw this thrush with white on the underside, a down-curved tail and of a larger size than the Song Thrush.

In May 1946, on the shore of Lake Waikare-iti, my brother Carl Sopp was watching a flock of Whiteheads (*Mohoua albicilla*) working through the low growth when he noted two larger birds following them. These answered to the description of the Pio Pio. They stopped close to him, regarded him steadily, then quietly retired.

Two brothers, David and Henry Odey, trappers and hunters, on 11 November 1952 told H. R. McKenzie of a song, new to them, which they had heard that day several miles north of Lake Waikaremoana. Their description of the song fitted that of W. P. Mead and H. R. McKenzie of song heard by them on the Wanganui River, believed to be Pio-Pio. I have since found that a good population exists where the Odey brothers heard the song.

At the edge of a natural clearing far back from Lake Waikare-iti, on 9/4/53, with another brother, Brian Sopp, I was waiting in the evening for deer when a bird, with undulating flight, came from the bush behind and settled on the top of a small bog pine five feet above our hiding place. It sang a beautiful loud clear song, then flew back into the bush. By this time I had been furnished by Mr W. P. Mead, of Wanganui, with a good photo of a mounted specimen of the Pio Pio in the Wanganui Museum, and I knew this fine songster could be none other than it. I had not previously heard the song or anything closely approaching it.

On 9 April 1955 I took four friends, Mr and Mrs W. Holloway and Mr and Mrs Shaler, of Rotorua, for a tramp to the Pio-Pio country. The two men were veterans of the bush. While we were having our lunch in a small clear spot a Pio-Pio gave its alarm call in a thick bush beside us. Another called nearby as if in answer. The first then came out on to the leafy face of the bush only six feet away from us and in full view, where it fed on 'leaf-roller' grubs for several minutes. While obtaining the grubs it supported

itself largely by fluttering with wings vibrating strongly and audibly. We had ample opportunity to note the shape of the bill, the white throat and generally light colour underneath, down-curved tail and reddish-brown colouring on top of the tail. Unfortunately the two cameras carried by the party were not ready. On returning home later we checked with the photo by W. P. Mead and all agreed that the bird we had seen was certainly a Pio-Pio. The bird departed quietly through the trees.

A mile from the above place we flushed another from the undergrowth. It flew low and settled in a bunch of hard-fern a little way ahead. It did not move so I bent down and parted the fern fronds, causing it to make an unhurried departure from within six inches of my hands. It showed no fear while being followed at a few feet from perch to perch by Mr Holloway and Mrs Shaler with their cameras. No photograph was obtained owing to the dull light under the bush and the leaves and twigs of the undergrowth. This bird was silent. Between the two places where the birds were seen several others gave alarm and other calls. The alarm call was the most frequent. It is a succession of even staccato notes like that of the bellbird, louder and slower. This is usually given three times with very short pauses between. Mr Holloway remembered having often heard this call up the Patea River fifteen or more years ago, but he had not seen the bird.

The chatter of the Bush Hawk (*Falco novaseelandiae*) has a similar tone but trails down at the end and is not usually repeated in quick succession. The illustration in *New Zealand Birds*, Oliver, of the head of the Pio-Pio by the late Mrs L. A. Daff I consider to be a perfect likeness.

A VISIT TO A NESTING COLONY OF CRESTED PENGUINS (*Eudyptes p. pachyrhynchus*)

By OLGA SANSOM and PHIL DORIZAC

During the last week of August 1956, while on a five-day visit to Doubtful Sound, Western Southland, on the advice and through the courtesy of Mr George Howard, we landed at Rolla Island, a high forest-clad half-acre island in deep water at the junction of Hall's Arm and Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound. With some 95 miles of waterway this sound is shallow at the entrance - 200 feet in places - due to the slowing down of the ancient glacier, but in Deep Cove, at the head, there are depths of over 1000 feet. Rolla Island stands steep to the sea. The Spanish names of this island, of Bausa Island, Malaspina Sound and Espinosa Point, were given by Malaspina, the Spanish explorer of this sound, in 1793.

From our launch *Constance* seals and penguins were seen at close quarters, while Deep Cove harboured a somewhat unusual visitor, a nine-foot Leopard Seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*). Complete with spots, a surprising turn of speed and athletic abandon, he shot under the *Constance* and out again to toss a fish with an impressive snapping of teeth.

Rolla Island appears to be vermin-free. Its coverage is magnificent. A few massive kahikatea, rimus and miros crown the island; there is a coastal strip of Rata and great Grass Trees (*Dracophyllum*) with trunks eight inches in diameter swinging out over the deep water of the fiord. Coprosmas, the aromatic green flowered *Ascarina lucida*, some pseudo-panax and notho-panax and a small tangle of supplejack compose the scrubby cover. A rug-sized patch of *Imesipteris*, related to the lycopods, and usually epiphytic, makes unexpected ground cover, while *Asplenium flaccidum*, also a tree dweller, was growing in the ground alongside it. Veined white marble was noted on this island. There is no water on the island.