

Of the 260 nests in the first group the following is the analysis of clutch sizes on the above date:

Eggs:	0	1	2	3	4
Nests:	8	52	185	13	1

plus 1 nest containing 1 chick

The average size of 11 eggs measured was 50.9 x 37.0 mm. One abnormal egg, 29.0 x 24.1, was found in a nest with a normal one, 51.9 x 36.0.

On the following day a pair of Grey Duck, a pair of Paradise Duck, and a Black-backed Gull were feeding in and near the stream; a large immature Black-backed was harassing the colony and constantly being chased by adult Black-bills.

Pied Oyster-catchers, Pied Stilts, Banded Dotterels and Black-fronted Terns also nest in the vicinity.

— P. CHILD

BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL IN CANTERBURY

I have been interested in recent reports by Brathwaite and Andrew (*Notornis* 6, 146 and 185; 7, 57) of the Australian Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*) in the North Island. I can now add a South Island record.

Some time in April 1956 Mr Bruce Todd saw at Leithfield Beach, North Canterbury, a plover of a kind which he knew he had never seen before. It was feeding in very shallow water. He was able to photograph the bird on colour film and obtained some fairly close shots with a telephoto lens. Subsequently the film was twice run through for my benefit. The orange bill was very evident in some of the photos and the rest of the bird answered well to the written description. I have no doubt about the identification.

— R. J. SCARLETT

NORTH ISLAND ROBIN 'ANTING'

On 31/12/56, returning from the summit of Kapiti down the track leading to the caretaker's house, I noticed a male North Island Robin (*P. australis longipes*) repeatedly picking up something from the track; and performing unusual movements. I soon realized that the bird was 'anting'.

It was turning over dry leaves lying on the ground and picking up ants from underneath and stroking them along the edges of its primaries. The right and left wing were each treated alternately and the feathers stroked from both sides. I was very sorry that owing to the large group of people I was leading, and the short time available, I could not stop long enough, and had to move on, flushing the bird after a short time. The picking up of ants and stroking them along the wings alternately was repeated eight times during the short time of observation. Sometimes one ant was used for both wings, and at other times a fresh ant was picked up after it was used on one wing only.

This was the first time I ever saw a bird anting, and it was therefore of special interest to me.

— F. C. KINSKY

LONG-TAILED CUCKOO AND HOUSE SPARROW

On 29/12/56, a Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Eudynamis taitensis*) was observed stealing a naked chick out of a House Sparrow's nest in the top of a kanuka tree near our kitchen tent. (The camp was on Webber's property at the north end of Kapiti Island.) The next day a second chick was taken from this nest by a Long-tailed Cuckoo.

On 4/1/57, at about 7 p.m., I observed a Long-tailed Cuckoo settling in the same tree, and moving from branch to branch approaching the sparrow's nest. Perched on a small branch just outside the nest opening, the Cuckoo pushed its head and half of its body into the nest (I thought it was looking for another chick), and after a short while flew off and returned to the bush

not far away. A member of the party climbed the tree and found four eggs in the nest, three of them normal sparrow's eggs and the fourth somewhat smaller and lighter in colour. My first impression was that this egg was also a sparrow's egg, but lighter, as very often happens in sparrows' clutches. The next day, 5 January, in the morning, the tree was climbed again — and it was found that the clutch had grown to five eggs, four normal sparrow's eggs and the mysterious egg of the day before. It struck me that this was not normal, as the lightest egg in a sparrow's clutch is generally the last egg laid.

Not having any knowledge of the habits of the Long-tailed Cuckoo and the dimensions and colouring of its eggs, I only took note of the facts as found.

After my return, I saw at the Dominion Museum Mr Stead's paper on the Long-tailed Cuckoo and learnt that the dimensions of this cuckoo's eggs, as known up to now, are smaller than those of the House Sparrow's. The colour, as described by Mr Stead, also agreed with the colouring of the eggs seen.

I am now convinced that the egg seen was a cuckoo's egg.

— F. C. KINSKY

CHAFFINCH TAKES THE CAKE

On 11/11/55 we were having afternoon tea on the lawn when a Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) came down to forage. A piece of cake was thrown to it, but though it approached it, coming to within three yards of us to do so, it made no attempt to eat it. However, when the piece of cake was crumbled the bird ate and then filled its beak and made off. This was repeated four times. The bird was by its flight pattern obviously taking the cake to its nest.

— W. A. WILLIAMSON

FALCON IN CHATHAM ISLANDS

Recently R. J. Scarlett (*Notornis* 6, p. 57) commented on the 'former existence of the falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae* Gmelin) in the Chatham Islands', which, according to him, 'does not seem to have been recorded'. This authenticated record is based on five bones of *Falco* from the Chathams in the collections of the Canterbury Museum, collected over a period of about sixty years. However, it may be of interest to point out that quite a number of references occur in the literature of Chatham Islands birds to previous records of a species of *Falco* from this region.

Most of the prior records of *Falco* from the Chathams are based on identifications of bones collected by H. O. Forbes in February 1892 along the shores of Petre Bay, Chatham Islands. These records may be found in the following accounts: Forbes, 1892*a*, *Nature*, 46 (1185): 252-3; 1892*b*, *Nature*, 46 (1191): 404; 1893*a*, *Roy. Geogr. Soc., Suppl. Pap.*, 3 (4): 607-637; 1893*b*, *Fortnightly Rev.*, 53 (317): 669-690; 1893*c*, *Ibis* (6), 5, (20): 521-546. Other references to the presence of small hawks on the Chathams occur also, and these are probably based on Forbes's records, although some (e.g., Rothschild's) may be based on identifications from other collections. Among these secondary sources are: Milne-Edwards, 1896, *Ann. Sci. Nat. Zool.*, (8), 2: 117-136; Taylor White, 1896, *T.N.Z.I.*, 29: 162-168; Evans, 1899, *Birds, Cambr. Nat. Hist.*, 9; Rothschild, 1907, *Proc. Fourth Int. Orn. Congr., Lond.*, 1905 (9); 191-217; Lambrecht, 1933, *Handbuch der Palaeornithologie*.

Fortunately, unlike some other records of birds reputed to have inhabited the Chatham Islands at an earlier time, bones of *Falco* do exist, and probably quite a few more will be found in the near future. The relationship of this bird to the New Zealand mainland species would be of interest, if it should be possible to distinguish them from bones alone, particularly since the sub-specific relation of the other hawk on the Chathams, the only present-day one there, *Circus approximans approximans* (vide Amadon, 1941, *Emu*, 40: 365-384), with the mainland form seems unusual. Fuller details of the Chatham Islands extinct birds and an amplification of the accounts of Forbes and others listed above will be given shortly, but it is thought that these prior records may not be without interest.

— E. W. DAWSON