

tition to a minimum. The greatest significance of the book lies in the fact that it not only covers most of the most important facets of the theory and practice of bird study, and surveys our present state of knowledge, but also points out where there are at present worthwhile opportunities for further study. The two final sections containing regional and general information will be welcomed by travelling ornithologists or those requiring overseas contacts for their work.

In a publication of the scope outlined above, some shortcomings are almost inevitable. Thus one wonders why some world regions have been treated adequately, while others—such as the Far East, including the Malayan region, and even Australasia—seem less well covered, perhaps owing to the lack of contributors interested in those areas. Also, it may be pointed out that the regional information is often out of date and the spelling, particularly of foreign names, often leaves much to be desired.

K.A.W.

## OBITUARY

It is with regret that we have to announce the death on 16 May 1957 of Dr W. R. B. Oliver. A full obituary will appear in a later issue.

## RELIEF FOR HUNGARIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS

This was discussed at the Annual General Meeting, and the following letter has since been received from Dr K. Wodzicki:

Sir: During the short-lived revolution in October 1956 the Hungarian Ornithological Institute in Budapest was gutted; one hundred thousand volumes of the Institute's library and 40,000 bird skins of their national collections were burnt; further, the news reaching us from the neighbouring countries and from Hungary itself is that the homes of some ornithologists have been destroyed and that the material existence of all of them is precarious. Polish, German and recently British ornithologists have tried to help their Hungarian colleagues by collecting money, from which parcels containing clothing, underwear and footwear could be sent, and from which perhaps some of their needs of standard ornithological periodicals could be met. The address of the Hungarian Ornithological Institute and the names of its seven members are in the hands of our Treasurer, to whom any contributions may be sent. The experience of Polish ornithologists regarding parcels has been that if the parcels are sent through the Red Cross to the recipients, care of the Hungarian Red Cross, they are delivered.

Wellington, 31/5/57

K. WODZICKI

## SHORT NOTES

### GREY DUCKLING KILLED BY PARADISE DUCKS

On 29/1/57 in Takahe Valley I disturbed a brood of five Grey Ducklings (*A. superciliosa*) about a week old, as I walked along the shore of Lake Orbell. They swam away from me into deep water and then, calling as they went, set course for a parent bird some hundred yards further out. Indirectly between them and their objective was a family of Paradise Ducks (*Tadorna variegata*) composed of parents and four well-grown young. Attracted by the sight of the ducklings and, no doubt, by their pipings as well, the adults set course to intercept the brood and upon reaching it (it made no attempt, until too late, to avoid contact) attacked it viciously with wings and bill. They were joined by

their immature birds which did the same and within two minutes four of the five Grey Ducklings had been sunk without trace — indeed, one at least was held beneath the water's surface by a Paradise Duck until it drowned.

Throughout all this the parent Grey Duck stayed where it was and could not be heard even to utter a protest, though its bill was open at times. The surviving duckling then made off to shore again and was soon in the shelter of the marginal vegetation.

I was rather surprised by the ferocity of the attack and prompted to wonder whether Paradise Ducks, which are almost always present on the lake, have been responsible for attacks on other species in the past — for example, N.Z. Scaup and Blue Duck which are often to be seen either on the lake or, in the case of the Blue Duck, in the Tunnel Burn.

— G. R. WILLIAMS

[According to Delacour (*Waterfowl of the World*, I, p. 246), Paradise Shelducks in captivity are notorious for their exceedingly bad temper! — Ed.]

### COOT ON THE HEATHCOTE RIVER

On 28/3/57 I saw an Australian Coot (*Fulica atra australis*) swimming in the Heathcote River at St Martins, Christchurch. I was informed about it nearly three weeks ago when it was further down the river; and from the description given me then, presumed it was a stray Dabchick. When I found the Coot it was half a mile further up the river from where it was first reported. It was swimming with Grey Ducks and Mallard, nearby being two Mute Swans (*C. olor*) and a domestic goose. The Coot was rather timid, but appeared to be in good health, its plumage being quite bright.

G. GUY

### A ROCK WREN'S NEST ON THE MACKINNON PASS

For some seasons I have been guiding on the Milford Track. Prompted by Guthrie-Smith's account (*Sorrows and Joys of a New Zealand Naturalist*, pp. 143-148) of the nest of a Rock Wren (*Xenicus gilviventris*) which he found on the Mackinnon Pass some twenty years ago, I decided to search that area again and succeeded in finding a nest in November 1956.

25/11/56. About 150 yards from the top of the zig-zags at the eastern end of the pass Mr Roy Kelly and I came across a female Rock Wren. She hopped among the tussock for a while at the edge of the track, then flew up on to a big outcrop of rock. She hopped and flitted around there fussily, disappearing and reappearing but sticking to the immediate area. The male bird appeared from the direction in which we had come and gradually approached. He seemed distressed at our being there, but after a minute or so he worked his way along through the scrub around the edge of the rock. Finally after some minutes he disappeared behind a 'lily' leaf and behind the *Dracophyllum*. The female in the meantime had disappeared over the top of the rock. We were at a distance of about fifteen feet from where the male bird disappeared, so after waiting a couple of minutes to ascertain whether he was staying where he was — presumably on the nest — and not wishing to disturb them too much, we carried on over the pass to the monument.

On the way back I went within a couple of feet and saw the entrance hole. Both birds flew from the nest when I approached. The nest was placed in the roots of a rocky outcrop. It was well hidden, with the entrance behind a small bush of *Dracophyllum uniflorum*. Two mountain daisies (*Celmisia coriacea*) and a mountain buttercup (*Ranunculus lyalli*) grew alongside; a patch of foliose lichen and moss grew thickly on the rock. The nest itself was well constructed and compact. Dry strips of *Astelia* and snowgrass (*Danthonia*) were the main materials. One strong 'guy rope' of *Danthonia* was woven into the top of the entrance hole. This 'guy rope' went straight out from the nest through the small *Dracophyllum* and bent downwards at right angles. Moss, lichen and some feathers were interwoven while a few feathers lined the nest. The feathers used were Kea and Kiwi. Feathers were used sparingly.