

he rejoined the Customs, but soon afterwards was appointed to the staff of the Dominion Museum, becoming director in 1928. Ever since, the name of Oliver has been a prominent one in New Zealand scientific circles. Among the honours he attained was the award in 1936 of the Hector Medal for botanical research. He was president of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 1952-54, of which body he was also elected a fellow; president of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, 1934, and New Zealand State secretary for the Union from 1914 until his death—43 years—and a foundation member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

To the general public, perhaps Dr Oliver is best known as the author of *New Zealand Birds*, published in 1930, in which he presented all the vital information available up to that time on the native and introduced birds of New Zealand, a work entailing a prodigious amount of research and compilation. This book he enlarged to a much bigger and practically rewritten second edition, published in 1955. He also published in 1949 *The Moas of Australia and New Zealand*, a monographic work, and *Genus Coprosma*. The most important of the many papers he wrote on scientific subjects was perhaps his presidential address to the R.A.O.U., 'Avian Evolution in New Zealand and Australia' (*Emu*, 1945). He also edited a revised edition of Cheeseman's *New Zealand Flora*, 1945.

He was twice married and is survived by his widow and by a son and two daughters of his first marriage.

R.H.D.S.

SHORT NOTES

SOUTH ISLAND PIED OYSTERCATCHERS AWAY FROM THE SHORE IN THE NORTH ISLAND

In the South Island, particularly in the southern parts, Pied Oystercatchers (*H. o. finschi*) resorting to green fields or ploughlands are not an unusual sight. In the North Island, however, where large numbers are present between January and August, and smaller flocks of non-breeders remain between August and December, they are almost entirely birds of the tideline; and I had been familiar with them for more than a decade in several localities before I saw any away from the shore.

In recent years these oystercatchers have started to frequent Upper Manukau above the Onehunga-Mangere bridge, where there are two or three miles of shore ideally suited to them, except that there is no shellbank, reef or coastal roost from which they will not be driven by the highest tides. On 22/11/53 I was surprised to see eleven S.I.P.O. fly over the high stone wall which separates the extensive sports-ground of Waikaraka Park from the rocky fore-shore. When I looked over the wall I found that others had preceded them, so that nineteen were resting unconcernedly on one of the cricket pitches. Red billed and Black-backed Gulls habitually use this sports-ground; and sometimes, during big tides, a few Stilts, Godwits and Caspian Terns resort to it. On 31/12/54 about thirty S.I.P.O. had come up into a freshly ploughed field with many Red-billed Gulls and a few Godwits and Stilts. Again on 7/10/55, a big tide had driven twenty-four S.I.P.O. into the same ploughed field; and with them were three of the larger N.I.P.O. (*H. reischekii*), which seemed curiously out of their element in such an agricultural setting.

The winter of 1956 was exceptionally wet. On the south shore of Manukau the wintering waders spent more time than usual in the low-lying paddocks on the landward side of the sea-wall. On 15/7/56 more than 4000 waders, Godwits, Knots, Wrybills and Stilts, had flown inland, where a single oystercatcher joined them, while a flock of about 800 S.I.P.O. remained faithful to their shellbank. But on 12/8/56, although the tide was not unduly high, the shellbank was deserted and about 600 S.I.P.O. and a single Black Oystercatcher (*H. unicolor*) flew into the rain-sodden paddocks. I was told that during August many S.I.P.O. made a habit of leaving the shore for these green pastures.

It may be significant that all these instances of S.I.P.O.'s forsaking the tideline occurred at a season when the bulk of the population is moving inland in the South Island or is already breeding on the riverbeds.

R. B. SIBSON

NESTING WHITE-FACED HERON, WAIKANAE, 1956

White-faced Herons have become regular at Waikanae during the past 10 years and probably bred before nests were first observed. Up to seven, perhaps more, have been seen together. Mr H. V. Olliver, local Acclimatisation Society ranger, located single nests in tall pines beside Waikanae River in 1954 and 1955, and nearby residents reported in early spring that herons picked up fallen cabbage-tree leaves and flew off with them.

On 14 September 1956 Mr Eric Weggery reported nesting on his property a good deal further upstream than previous sites. Up to 4 birds had been seen near the 70ft pine in which he eventually found a nest. The tree is the westernmost in a shelter-belt separating pastured terraces and dunelands from low river flood-plain with willows and poplars. It is 50 yards from the river, about a mile from the coast. The nest was about 45ft up, barely visible from below through a confusing network of twigs and branches when the observer lay prone beside the unclimbable main trunk.

No adults were about at 10 a.m. on 15 September, but preening movements of grey birds could be seen through gaps in the nest, and odd down feathers floated down. The nest seemed to be lined with dead poplar leaves from flood debris. Once a pair of herons flew downstream above the pines and croaked as they passed the nest, and later a single bird flew towards the nest but veered off without perching, calling loudly. On 23 September, 6.30 a.m., a heron flew out of the nest tree and lazily away, and another passed over 15 minutes later. Nest occupants now showed themselves as two well-grown fledglings; one wandering 18 inches from the nest, with a white hairy-looking head, otherwise fully fledged, with young quill feathers in its wings, which it exercised freely, its companion remaining barely visible on the nest. The birds pecked off pine needles and nest leaves and let them fall. On 29 September, 8.30 a.m., the nest was empty, but two fledglings sat together six feet away. On 6 October, 5.30 p.m., they sat together on a branch about 12 feet from the deserted nest. The tree was quite deserted on 13 October, but three herons were feeding on a nearby backwater pond and flew down the river when disturbed. It is suspected, but not proved, that more than one nest was occupied on the Waikanae River in 1956.

C. A. FLEMING

UNUSUAL MOVEMENT OF SPOTTED SHAGS ON OTAGO HARBOUR

During the week 12-18 May, Dunedin and Otago generally experienced extremely wet and stormy weather. The following week was, by comparison, calm and pleasant, and the following bird movement was noted daily by a number of people.

Small flocks of Spotted Shags (*Phalacrocorax punctatus*) flew up the Otago Harbour from low water till full tide. On the falling tide these birds, in the company of a few Red-billed Gulls and some Black-backed Gulls, drifted down the harbour with the tide, feeding on some marine creatures. The feeding area would be not more than half an acre in extent and only in the deep water of the channel (W.A.W.). The feeding pattern was simple. Shags would dive and, on coming to the surface, swim with the flock until diving again. Birds which lagged behind for a few yards would flap their wings dry while sitting on the water and then fly to the front of the flock, there to land and dive again.

The number of Red-billed Gulls was noticeably small (W.A.W.), not more than 100, and not more than a dozen Black-backed Gulls were seen with the flock on the one occasion that W.A.W. had it under observation,