

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, WAIKANAЕ, 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,