OCCURRENCE OF 'RED-LEGGED' HERONS IN NEW ZEALAND

In *Notornis* (Vol. 5, No. 4) I gave some details regarding reports of varying intensity of red appearing in the legs or bills of herons, a phase which is believed to be associated with breeding. At that time I asked for reports of any changes in colour of legs or bill of any species of heron to be sent to me, but the only reports received came from Otago, with the exception of one from Waimate, in South Canterbury. Mr Hudson in his article on 'the White-faced Herons breeding in North Auckland' mentions that the birds had pink legs (*Notornis*, Vol. 7, No. 6).

Now that the White-faced Heron (*Notophoyx novaehollandiae*) is seen in increasing numbers throughout New Zealand, more members are in a position to make observations. Would members seeing variations in the colour of legs or bill in any species of heron, please communicate with the writer, 15 Cornwall Street, Vauxhall, Dunedin, E.1, giving species, date, where seen, degree of redness (pale, dull, bright) of legs, feet or bill.

L. E. WALKER

A RECENT SOUTH ISLAND RECORD OF THE MYNA

On 22 June 1956, when driving on the main road between Nelson and Richmond, I was surprised to see two Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) on the roadside just beyond Stoke. In fact, I was so surprised that I had the driver of our car (Mr D. V. Zumbach, the ranger of the Nelson Acclimatisation Society) turn back for another look. The two Mynas were now in a paddock a few yards in from the road edge and were positively identified by both of us. This occurrence of Mynas in the South Island is of considerable interest, for, according to Cunningham (*Notornis*, 3: 57-64 and 4: 66-67), the species has not been recorded there previously this century. The nearest places in the North Island where they do normally or occasionally occur are around Wanganui or in the Wairarapa – both at least 130 miles away. If Mynas are established again in this locality it is surprising that they have not been recorded before, but perhaps other observers feel rather like I felt at the time – that someone else must surely have noticed them and already reported their presence. I have to thank Mr P. C. Bull for finally convincing me that the observation was even now still worth the making; and I wonder how many observations of a similar kind have not appeared for the same reason.

G. R. WILLIAMS

BUSH-HAWK TAKING YOUNG STARLINGS FROM NEST

On 6 December 1956 I saw a Bush-hawk (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) fly to a Starling's nest in a dead tree in the open. It secured a large youngster and flew away with it. At intervals of seven minutes it returned and took two more, using its foot to pull them out of the nest-hole. It appeared that the young Starlings heard the Bush-hawk alight and came forward in the hole expecting a parent with food. The parents did not come near at the time and I did not see them about the nest later.

G. E. SOPP

A NOTE ON THE BREEDING OF WEKAS NEAR GISBORNE

We are situated 11 miles from Gisborne and the house is on the flat with a fairly large rough garden. There are also 200 acres of hill adjoining. As a rule there are between ten and a dozen wekas in the garden and surroundings, and a large number on the hills. They are increasing. One pair mainly was under observation. This pair brought out four chicks on 15 October. On 16 November they were mating again and old chicks were chased out of the garden. One I had to rescue, as it was bleeding about the head, injuries administered mainly by the cock bird. The cock bird carries its tail mostly up, the hen droops hers. The hen started to sit within a week, the cock bird carrying scraps of bread and meat to her. I don't look for nests, as on the occasions when nests here have been found

the parent birds desert them. There were no results from this hatch. On 10 January two young chicks appeared from the same two adults. Two of the young ones from the October hatch frequent the fowl run, but are kept out of the garden by the old birds. On 12 February they were mating again, but in this case I think it was a different hen, though the cock bird was the old one. I was then away for a year, and since coming back have only noticed one clutch of two. I found a weka's egg in the vegetable garden which had been punctured and contained a half-grown chick. As they are inveterate egg-eaters, I am wondering whether this is stopping their increase. One I found in the fowl house had speared an egg and was running off with it. Usually they suck them in the nests. Some few years ago I was having about twenty acres of dense scrub fallen on the hill. The scrubcutters found freshly constructed wekas' nests, and just as they were finishing they found a third nest with two young wekas a day or two old. From the first nest to the last was a distance of about seven chains, and I am convinced that the parent birds had successively transferred their eggs from one nest to another. The egg is a big egg for the size of the bird, but apparently they can carry an egg in their bill. *J. M. MONCKTON*

REVIEW

E. G. TURBOTT: Notes on the plumages and breeding cycle of the Spotted Shag, *Phalacrocorax (Stictocarbo) punctatus punctatus* (Sparrman 1786). Rec. Auck. Inst. Mus. 4 (6): 343-363 (1956).

Details are given of the distribution of this species on some islands in the Hauraki Gulf, on the west coast mainland of the Auckland Peninsula and off-lying Oaia Island. An account then follows of the various plumage sequences, and, since it conforms to data on the colony at Bethells, Murphy's terminology for South American Shags is followed. Adult plumage is divided into three phases – pre-nuptial, nuptial and post-nuptial, correlated respectively in New Zealand with pair formation in April and May, nest building in June and July, and egg laying and hatching in August and September. All the sequences are very fully described and illustrated with some excellent field photographs by O. Petersen. Juvenile plumages are also divided into three sequences – nestling, juvenal and sub-adult. These, too, are fully described, or rather the first two are, for the third is ill-defined, but eventually seems to resolve into a plumage very similar to the contemporaneous adult post-nuptial.

A table summarises details of the breeding cycle in the eastern (Hauraki Gulf) and west coast colonies, and makes obvious some interesting differences which are briefly discussed. However, Mr Turbott emphasises that satisfactory explanations for these differences in the timing of the breeding cycle will have to await the collection of more data.

It is extremely useful to have this painstaking and accurate account of a complicated problem in natural history, though I found the general clarity of the account a little clouded by the occasional use of 'fledgling', 'immature' and 'post-juvenal' without it being stated in what way, if any, the meaning of these terms differs from the apparent equivalents used to describe the plumage phases. May we hope that Mr Turbott will soon be able to extend his attention to the Spotted Shag populations of the South Island and Cook Strait?

G.R.W.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are asked to pay their subscriptions promptly. Delay in paying not only adds to the costs of running the Society, but also greatly increases the burden of work borne by the Honorary Treasurer.