

## SHORT NOTES

### WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN AT WAIKANAE

On 30/3/57 a winter-plumaged White-winged Black Tern was seen at the Waikanae estuary. It resembled those seen in 1954 (*Notornis*, vol. 6, p. 69) except that its club-shaped nape patch was much paler and less conspicuous, and the black ear patches thus more striking; outer primaries blackish with light shafts; lesser coverts of leading edge and a 'yoke' across the front of the mantle darker than rest of upper surface. The bird was seen again on 6, 14 and 28 April, and for the last time on 6 May. Like the 1954 birds it was aggressive to White-fronted and Black-fronted Terns with which it associated. On 6 April it spent much time on a shallow pool washing, and then preened vigorously on the nearby sand. On the last two dates there seemed more dark feathers than at first, giving a broader dark band across the mantle and on both sides of the carpal flexure.

C. A. FLEMING

### ARCTIC SKUA LANDING ON BEACH

Every autumn, when a flock of up to 1500 White-fronted Terns gathers at Waikanae estuary (*Notornis*, vol. 6, p. 69), numbers of Arctic Skuas (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) can be observed harrying terns offshore as they return to roost with the flock. Thus at least five different skuas were counted on 10/4/55, and several on 23/4/57, occasionally chasing their victims across the breakers and over the beach, giving good opportunities for close observation. Some skuas at this time have the projecting pointed tail-feathers of adults, though not, in my experience, such long ones as illustrated in the *Handbook of British Birds*, vol. V, p. 138. One bird seen several times (23/4/57) seemed most like the 'second winter pale phase' illustrated in the *Handbook*, pl. 139, but whiter mid-ventrally; it must have been particularly hungry, as it repeatedly chased terns in wide circles over the sand-flats. Incidentally these Arctic Skuas were sometimes chased by Caspian Terns, whereas the Pomatorhine Skua reported in 1953 chased Caspian Terns (*Notornis*, vol. 7, p. 62).

On 28/4/57, skuas were still conspicuous, and after many sorties over the beach, one eventually landed without fuss quietly among a small group of gulls on the edge of the roosting mob of 200 White-fronted Terns, with which incidentally were eight Black-fronted, a Fairy, and a White-winged Black Tern. I was at the time prone on the sand observing with telescope at a range of little more than a chain. The skua stood almost motionless facing the terns and me, occasionally taking a waddling step forward, then after about two minutes flew out to sea. Though the gulls moved aside for it, neither they nor the terns showed any sign of panic. I do not know of another record of a healthy Arctic Skua's landing in New Zealand.

C. A. FLEMING

### GREENFINCH TAKING BEES

At 5.30 a.m. on 29/12/56, just as a hive of bees woke up, a cock Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) settled on the roof. During the next twenty minutes he swooped down and snapped up about two dozen bees as they walked out on to the alighting-board into the sunshine. He caught them by the thorax and crushed them before eating. Between whiles he cleaned his beak.

R. JACKSON

### GREAT SPOTTED KIWI EATING SNAILS

Many dead snails (*Paryphanta gagei*) with their inner spires broken were found in January, September and December 1956 on the moss just inside the bush at Seven-mile Creek, near Greymouth. The living snails are found under the alpine shrubs in the open a few yards away. Judging by the footprints, it is the Great Spotted Kiwi (*A. haasti*) which feeds on these snails, taking them into the cover of the bush to eat them.

R. JACKSON

[Dr A. W. B. Powell comments that the Weka (*Gallirallus australis*) also eats these snails. — Ed.]