

SPINE-TAILED SWIFTS OVER RANGITOTO

On 19/4/58 I had the good fortune to visit the crater of Rangitoto and was greeted there by a sight worth recording. As I approached the highest tip of the rim a bird flashed past, flying at unusual speed, and I caught the glint of blue on its wing before I realised what I was looking at. The wings were sickle-shaped, black and stream-lined; they remained motionless and spread out to full extent except for an occasional propellor-like flutter as the bird sped to a great height above and disappeared into the clear sky a few hundred feet overhead. I was astonished. This was a swift or a swallow of the summer skies of England and I deeply regretted not having brought my field-glasses. There was no need to worry, for in a few minutes it returned accompanied by another and this time came even closer than before, so I was able to get a good view. This time both birds dipped a few hundred feet into the crater then soared upwards behind a pohutukawa tree on the rim and once more vanished into the cloudless sky. I sat down by the concrete gun emplacement and ate my lunch. For a full hour the two birds gave a display of high speed flying and aerobatics, occasionally coming so close that the swish of their wings could be heard and I could take careful note of their shape and colour. They were certainly like no swift or swallow I had seen before; a little like large-sized House Martins (*Delichon urbica*) with their navy blue and white markings, but flying much faster and in higher sweeps. There appeared to be a white patch under the beak on the throat, white under the tail and a greyish white over the rump which appeared to become whiter on the back where the hind part of the wings crossed the back. The tail was square and short.

After more than thirty years of birdwatching, I have never had the luck to pick up a rarity. I realised that my chance had come, so telephoned to Mr. R. B. Sibson immediately on returning to Auckland; and after hearing my description, he confirmed my belief that the two birds I had seen were Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chaetura caudacuta*).

J. A. BUCHANAN



WRYBILL AT L. ROTORUA

On 19/1/58 accompanied by W. J. Broun I paid a visit to the estuary of the Hamurana Stream. The foreshore here is hardly the place where one would expect to see a Wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*). I was examining four small ducks which proved to be Grey Teal (*A. gibberifrons*), when my companion drew my attention to a small wader which he believed to be a Banded Dotterel feeding near a pair of Pied Stilts on a weed-covered sandspit about 100 yards away. In Rotorua we are always on the watch for straggling 'sand-pipers'; and at first glance, I thought that this bird with its long bill was one, but after a long and careful scrutiny through 7 x 50 binoculars, I saw beyond doubt that the small plover we were watching was a Wrybill. The black band on the upper breast was fading but still clearly visible, and the post-nuptial moult had obviously started. The Wrybill was a solitary straggler. We searched in vain for others both at Hamurana and, an hour later, on the Silica Flats, a more likely spot, where Wrybills have occasionally been reported in the past at this season.

M. S. BLACK