

as a stranger and had checked his description with Oliver and other books. He had not said much about it as he thought he would not be believed. After the article had appeared in the paper he had written to Mrs. Eyles on his own initiative. I found he had a good knowledge of birds and I think his observation was correct, as he is familiar with the other herons. His record throws quite a different slant on what may have been the position. It is now possible that the two herons recorded are not two vagrants from across the Tasman but the progeny of a successful New Zealand mating.

B. D. BELL



A NEST OF THE BLACK STILT

In a season which has been characterised by the repeated flooding of nesting-sites of the sea- and shore-birds which migrate to the riverbeds of Otago and Canterbury, it is satisfying to be able to report the successful hatching of a clutch of the somewhat rare Black Stilt (*Himantopus novaezealandiae*).

On 17/11/57 a pair was seen on the Orari riverbed, near Geraldine, South Canterbury, i.e. about 14 miles, in a direct line, from the seacoast. Several pairs of Black-billed Gulls, Pied Oystercatchers, Pied Stilts, and Banded Dotterels were also in the area; and, judging by the agitated calling, many were nesting or preparing to nest.

The Black Stilts were particularly ferocious, swooping at a visitor continually and, when this failed to have the desired effect, feigning injury near the water's edge. In their anger they chased off other birds. After a search for an hour or so, the nest was found on a shingle-bar about five yards from the nearest water. It was merely a shallow depression of the river-sand between two largish stones, and lined with a few pieces of dry grass and twigs. The four eggs were neatly arranged with their narrower ends to the centre. In colour the background was pale fawnish, with dark brown blotches superimposed on pale purplish spots and blotches. Sizes were 43.5 x 31.9, 42.6 x 31.5, 44.5 x 31.6, 45.2 x 32.3 mm.

The appearance of the adults agreed with the description given in Oliver, the bill being noticeably longer than that of the Pied; also the legs appeared to be a paler pink than those of the Pied while the call seemed to be louder and deeper in pitch than that of the Pied.

The 25th to 28th November were very wet days, after which the river was in flood; the bed considerably altered and many nests of other birds were washed out. However, the four eggs of the Black Stilt were apparently on high enough shingle not to be affected and on 1/12/57 the four young had appeared, and seemed to be three to four days old. They were squatting on a sandy patch at the nest site beside some flood debris (dead gorse) and were particularly well camouflaged. On the dorsal side they were mottled fawns with darker brownish-black markings on the crown, nape and back, more or less in two lines on the back. The ventral surface was pale greyish-white, the bill slaty-black, iris hazel brown, legs fawnish-pink; three pink toes, slightly webbed at their bases.

On the following day, and on subsequent visits, the young were not seen, and were probaly hiding among the shingle, for the parents continued yapping noisy threats from overhead.

P. CHILD