

# NOTES ON THE HEIGHTS REACHED BY SOME BIRDS IN THE EASTERN RANGES OF THE NORTH ISLAND

I was most interested to read in the April issue of *Notornis*, 1958 'Notes on the height reached by some species of birds on the mountains of the North Island,' and I am forwarding some comments of my own from the region between the Napier-Taupo Road and the East Cape and westward to the Rangitaiki River. As I have spent over fifty nights in bush-camps and bivouacs and have climbed thirty-eight points and triggs over 3000 ft., I hope that these notes may be of some interest and value. I am grateful to Mr. A. Blackburn for his help and encouragement.

**BLACK SHAG.** Waipunga R. (trib. of Mohaka) 1 bird seen alt. 1600'. Motu River — alt. 900-1400', common.

**WHITE THROATED SHAG.** Odd birds on Waikaremoana.

**PARADISE DUCK.** Lagoons round Waikaremoana and Waikareiti-Kaipo Lagoon (N.E. of Waikareiti — alt. 3200'). Auini Str. (trib. of Ruakituri alt. 2000', and Pukekaho — 2600').

**BLUE DUCK.** Most mountain streams, alt. 1500' to 3500', 3500' being in the gorge of the Waiotukupuna near Manu-o-ha mt. and Raparaparikiki stream, Raukumara.

**BUSH HAWK.** Summit of Arowhana mt. 4700' — burnt-over scrub — 1 bird on 4/1/56.

**N.I. KAKA.** Some higher levels noted by myself: Lower slopes (west) of Pohokura mt. alt. 3000-3500' (in 1958), N.E. of Tarawera and west of Mohaka river; on Moanui trig alt. 3500', beech forest, on 16/5/54: Maungawaru range — alt. 3000-3800'; on three different dates; Puketaro and Manuoha triggs, alt. 4000', on 20/1/56 in red beech forest — not as plentiful as I noted thirty years ago.

**N.Z. PIGEON.** I seen on Moanui at c. 3000' in a gully in May, 1954.

**PARAKEET (Sp.?)** A few along upper reaches of the Motu River, alt. 1000-1500'. Tarapounamu ridge, alt. 2500' (sth. of Rotōrua — Waikaremoana road): Huiarau range (Whakataka) alt. 3000', on 29/1/54. Several seen on Manuoha mt. on 20/1/56; appeared to be eating the seed of *Nothofagus menziesii*, alt. 4600'. Two seen on Oharuru ridge, 4000 to 3880', on 23/2/56. One seen on Ngamoko trig on 30/1/36.

**LONG-TAILED CUCKOO.** Highest I heard on the Maungawaru range on 10/10/45, alt 3100'. Pohokura range, alt. 3000-3600', on 7/1/58.

**KINGFISHER.** On Waikareiti, alt. 2940', on 22/1/58.

**RIFLEMAN.** Pohokura, alt. 4000'; Moanui, alt. 3500'; Kapua, alt. 4100'; Honokawa, alt 4250'; Raukumara, alt. 3900-4200', in alpine scrub, 27/12/57. Riflemen were in numbers on Aniwanui track, alt. 2600', on 21/1/58.

**PIED TIT.** Highest I have heard on Motaupora mt., alt. 3200', west of Motu village, on 4/7/53. These birds seem less common than they were thirty years ago.

**N.I. ROBIN.** Manganui-o-hau stream (S.W. of Waikaremoana). Three were seen and heard, alt. 1800'. Maungawaru range — Two

heard, alt. 2500', 2700'. Tarndale ridge, one seen, alt. 2850', beside road; S.W. of Arowhana mt. on 1/2/57. Kopua ridge, alt. 4200', ? feeding on seed of *Olearia colensoi*, 23/2/57, five or six seen and watched for some time. Ridge S.E. of Hikurangi trig 2121 - Galatea S.D., one observed, alt. c. 2000', confirmed by A. Blackburn and I. A. D. Faulkner.

**WHITEHEAD.** Five seen on slopes near summit of Honokawa mt., alt. 4300', in scrub — cold S.W. gale and mist, on 16/4/58. There was a flock of Chaffinches with these five Whiteheads.

**GREY WARBLER.** Often seen in sheltered places up to 4000' — especially where there is scrub or second growth. Manuoha mt., alt. 4600', being the highest.

**BELL BIRD.** Seldom seen in beech forest — highest I noted on Whakapunake mt., alt. 3100', April, 1957.

**INTRODUCED BIRDS.** I have not kept notes of these — except that I found a nest of Dunnock with 4 eggs in *Nothofagus menziesii* scrub on Maungatapere, alt. 3600', on 24/11/34.

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## TWO NESTS OF THE SPUR-WINGED PLOVER

(a) On 18/9/57 a nest was found near Lumsden in an area of bare stones on dry flat ground. It contained four eggs and a few bits of dried grass lined the nest cup. It was fifty yards from a river. Both birds incubated, changing over about every two hours. Next day, when a third bird appeared on the scene, I saw an interesting display. The sitting bird flew off the nest and joined its mate; then two birds (which two I do not know) stood in line abreast, almost touching, squared off and at attention, with the third bird directly in front and about five yards distant. Then the two birds together gave a long crackling call in a descending scale, bowing forward at the waist as they did so, till their beaks were almost parallel to and touching the ground. Then the party broke up.

They pretend to feed when not quite sure of the hide and crouch with fluttering wings as a distraction display. The eggs were chipping on 19/9/57; on the next day three eggs hatched; the fourth was added; on 21/9/57 the nest was empty.

When the bird is standing, the spur is not seen (plates v and vi).

(b) On 16/12/57, another nest containing four eggs was found in the same area as the earlier nest. As there is only one known pair in this district this season, it is quite possible that the owners are the same pair as before. The nest was on dry flat ground amongst stones, thirty yards from a small area of swampy clay, the site being almost identical in type with that of nest number one, though half a mile distant. From the hide the birds appear from small mannerisms to be the same pair as previously watched, but this is pretty thin evidence. This nest is of interest, not only for its lateness, mid-December, but also for the fact that it raises the question as to whether the Spur-winged Plover may not raise two broods in a season.

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