

other insect to the one on the pole and fly off again to resume its hawking. The recipient always received the insect in its bill and then transferred it to a foot and "billed" it for a while before eating it. The darker plumage of the older bird could easily be contrasted with that of the young one it was feeding as it sat alongside. I watched these proceedings for close on half an hour. The following night the two birds were again at the same pole and repeated the behaviour of the previous night. They were not seen again.

The colour and behaviour of the two birds were unmistakably of parent and young — not courtship. As the parent was still feeding its young, it seems evident that the latter had only recently left the nest. Allowing six to seven weeks for incubation and nestling stages, this would indicate that the eggs were probably laid about the middle of July — two months earlier than the recorded time. Could this earlier breeding have been occasioned by the mild winter of 1958?

C. McCANN



SPINE-TAILED SWIFT OVER STEPHEN ISLAND

When I was on the summit of Stephen Island, Cook Strait, about 1.45 p.m. on 19/11/58, in the company of D. Merton, a very fast-flying bird was noted circling the top. At first glance the bird appeared very dark, with swept-back wings. It continued to circle high above the island for about thirty minutes before disappearing. The flight was very fast, consisting of long periods of gliding and soaring with short periods of very rapid wing-beat. Occasionally, the bird swooped lower, and the rush of wind through the feathers could be heard.

The bird was estimated to be about the size of a Black-fronted Tern or slightly smaller; the plumage generally appeared black or very dark brown with the face, throat and under tail coverts white. The back was a fawn shade. The bill was short, and also the tail, which was held fan-shaped in flight, but was not forked as in terns or swallows. After consulting Oliver (1956) it was decided that the bird was a Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacula*).

The bird was observed under ideal conditions, but its speed made it difficult to determine the exact colouration. The weather was fine, and the temperature warm. There was a light breeze from the south.

— BRIAN D. BELL



ALBINO BLACK-BACKED GULL IN BAY OF PLENTY

Since late in May, 1958, an albino Black-backed Gull (*L. dominicanus*) has been seen about the beach at Mt. Maunganui and has been fed by Mr. A. Watson and others. The description of the bird is as follows:—Beak, dark at the tip, fading to cream; eye, dark; tarsus, greyish; feet, stone colour to fawn. Generally the bird is a milk white colour, except for delicate fawn markings; an oblique line of fawn crosses the breast; there are fawn marks on mantle and lesser wing coverts and a band of fawn is visible near the end of the tail when it is spread. The bird appears to be immature.

R. V. McLINTOCK