

BANDED RAILS AT COLLINGWOOD

The Banded Rail (*R. philippensis*) is acknowledged to be a scarce bird in the South Island and a perusal of the classified summarised notes in *Notornis* reveals only four reports in recent years, the localities being Weheka in South Westland (1949), Takaka (1953), Onekaka (1953) and Picton (1955). The following note therefore may be of some interest.

In January, 1958, I spent a week with my family at Collingwood, which is situated on a spit at the mouth of the Aorere. This river, together with some other streams, reaches Golden Bay through an extensive delta of marsh and saltings. Towards dusk, when the rollicking calls of Wekas (*Gallirallus australis*) became more frequent on the scrub-covered slopes above the estuary, my wife and I used to walk beside the saltings and invariably we heard creaky calls "swit swit," such as we would unhesitatingly have attributed to Banded Rails if we had heard them coming from the mangroves or saltmarsh vegetation of northern New Zealand. The call which has been likened to the creaking of a fence-wire when someone puts his foot on it, has considerable carrying power and on still evenings we were able to hear it at 200-300 yards. The calls usually began about 8 p.m., while the last Thrushes and Blackbirds were still singing, and increased as night came on. On one walk I estimated that I heard at least eight birds, and six were calling at the same time.

Although we were unable to get a single glimpse of a Banded Rail, I have no doubt about the correctness of our identification, which is supported by the specimens from Takaka and Onekaka, only a few miles away. Two encounters with Wekas are perhaps worth recounting. One was seen to cross a road at dusk and to make for the tideline. Another was found swimming in a quiet backwater. However, no Wekas were heard calling from the saltings proper and it would appear that *rallus* and *gallirallus* are co-existing, without serious competition or overlap of habitat, *rallus* in the tidal marshes and *gallirallus* among the scrub of the drier country.

Along the coast of Golden Bay there is plenty of saltmarsh and estuarine cover suitable for Banded Rails, so that this elusive bird may well be more numerous than is suspected in the northern part of the South Island.

R. B. SIBSON



CAPE PIGEON TAKING FOOD FROM HAND

Late in the winter of 1958 a solitary Cape Pigeon (*Daption capensis*) used to come to a beach near Whangarei Heads seeking fish offal with Red-billed Gulls. It became so tame that it would eat from my hand. When the feed was over, it would fly away strongly to open water.

L. W. DELPH

[This bird probably lost its fear of man in more southerly waters; where, like the Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) in the north Atlantic, Giant Petrels and Cape Pigeons are tending to concentrate more and more around fishing vessels and whaling stations, attracted by supplies of easy food. Ed.]