

LOCAL BLACKBIRD MOVEMENTS

When I went on holiday on 25/2/57 the Blackbirds (*T. merula*) about my home at Kaipara Flats were plentiful as usual. A shot fired in the orchard would send thirty or forty to the shelter of totara trees. On my return on 10/3/57, their absence was complete. The first again seen or heard was on 2/4/57 and by 10/4/57 there were a few. About 18/4/57 they appeared to be back in perhaps half their usual numbers, but were quiet and subdued. By early June they had returned to full strength. Some eighty year old grape vines along a creek bank are usually stripped of their fruit but that year they were untouched. One drought year, 1954, the same thing happened. There was no evidence of the local birds dying and I can think of no special source of food elsewhere to which they would be attracted. Water was not short and fruit was available. This year, 1958, I saw no evidence of the population being diminished during the autumn.

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PETRELS OVER THE NORTH AUCKLAND MAINLAND

Every year during the summer the calls of petrels are heard soon after dark as they come in from the Tasman Sea and fly over my farm at Kaipara Flats. During the spring of 1957 I listened carefully for the first calls, but did not hear any till 7.55 p.m. on November 17th. After 8 p.m. the calls became much more frequent and till 8.25 p.m. the sky was full of them. Never have I heard so many before, but by 8.30 p.m. only the odd call could be heard. The last came at 8.40 p.m. On the following night only two calls were heard about five minutes apart and on the next night there were none. After that they increased to what seems to be normal for the time of the year, a call indicating a petrel passing every few minutes. After the New Year, few calls are heard and on some nights none. As far as I can tell, all these 'kek-kek-kek' petrels are travelling on the same course, roughly north-east.

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[C. A. Fleming (*N.Z. Bird Notes I*, 1944, pp. 58-59) has discussed the petrel calls which are heard over North Auckland on summer nights. They are believed to come from Cook's Petrels (*Pt. cooki*) which are heading for Little Barrier, but the suggestion has been made that Cook's or Mottled (*Pt. inexpectata*) Petrels or both may still breed on the ridges of Tamahunga (1380 ft.), The Dome (1037 ft.) or near Mt. Flat Top (800 ft.). This is a worthwhile matter for investigation.

At Little Barrier in mid-December, the first 'kek-kek' calls of incoming Cook's Petrels are heard about 8.5 p.m. (*R. B. Sibson, N.Z. Bird Notes II*, 1947, p. 137). B. D. Heather has noted a few Cook's Petrels back and calling over Little Barrier before the end of August. According to S. C. Rutherford, these petrels are often heard in summer at Orua Bay, Manukau Heads, where they pass over on a bearing which would take them to Little Barrier.—Ed.]