NAME CHANGES IN THE MOA GENUS *DINORNIS*

In Opinion 299, published 21st April, 1954, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature has ruled that the trivial names *novaezealandiae* Owen, 1843, and *struthoides* Owen, 1844, as published in the combinations *Dinornis novaezealandiae* and *Dinornis struthoides* are to be accepted and has placed these names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*. The Commission has further ruled that the trivial name *ingens* Owen, 1844, as published in the combination *Dinornis ingens* is to be rejected as a junior objective synonym of *Dinornis novaezealandiae* Owen, 1843, and has placed this name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology*.

This decision, made in response to an application lodged before 1941 by Gilbert Archey and R. S. Allan, answers a problem explained in detail by Archey in his monograph on "The Moa (1941, *Bull. Auckland Mus.* 1, pp. 8 & 63) and has the effect of reversing the alternative adopted by Archey, and followed by Oliver without comment, pending the Commission's decision. Consequently throughout the monographs of both Archey and Oliver (The Moas of New Zealand and Australia, *Dominion Mus. Bull.* 15, 1949), and throughout the moa section of Oliver's *New Zealand Birds* 2nd Edition (1955) the name *Dinornis novaezealandiae* should be used for the species referred to as *D. ingens* and the name *Dinornis struthoides* for the species referred to as *D. novaezealandiae*.

J. C. YALDWYN

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BIRD COUNTS WITH A CAMERA

Aerial photographs have long been accepted as a useful means of securing counts of nests on sites inaccessible by surface approach, such as colonies established on isolated rock stacks which are exposed to rough seas and may be unclimbable. Ornithologists are only too well aware of the difficulty of making an accurate count of sea birds when, for example, a gannet breeding station is disturbed by observers and hundreds or even thousands fly off within a few seconds.

There is a simple solution to this problem by the use of a 35 mm camera and the normal projector used for colour slides. As an illustration, Pied Stilts have a favourite feeding ground on an island shell-spit in Ohiwa Harbour. The approach is without natural cover, and even if by the aid of a hide one can get fairly close, the constant coming and going of the birds makes visual counting a poor proposition.

The easier method is to advance with the camera set for instant use, and when the stilts are flushed to take one or two snapshots as soon as all are in the air. The resulting "count exposures" are then projected, either as filmstrip or as single slides by temporarily inserting in glass covers, on to a large sheet of paper (preferably squared) in place of the usual screen. Providing the projector is blower-cooled to avoid overheating the film, one can then make a pencil stroke over every bird in the picture, counting at the same time. On taking down the paper, which is now a chart of the flight pattern, a recount can be taken as a check, crossing each stroke. The above stilt counts have been

206 and 231, whilst as an instance of greater numbers, 940 Red-billed Gulls feeding in a paddock have been counted in this way.

It will be seen that the only possibility of error in this method is when one bird is directly behind another, and so is obscured from the camera, but in practice this is a small margin which would have the effect of slightly increasing the numbers.

It is not, of course, essential to use expensive colour film for this work, and black and white negatives will reduce the cost to about 2¼d. for a count exposure, printing being unnecessary. At this price one can afford to make complete records, and the fact that light and shade are transposed when the negative is projected does not affect its efficiency for this purpose. A further advantage of black and white is the much higher shutter speed which can be used, resulting in sharper definition for moving subjects. Since these are usually far enough away for the focus to be set at infinity, one can employ large stops and speeds of 1/125th to 1/300th second. The former gives quite satisfactory results.

I have found this technique both simple and effective. It can naturally be used for counts of nests in thickly populated breeding colonies as well. The actual counting is tedious, but at least it can be carried out in the comfort of one's home, and there is the consolation of knowing that the tally is virtually correct.

W. T. PARHAM

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ERYTHRISTIC STILTS IN MANUKAU

During the autumn of 1957 aberrant erythristic Stilts *(H. leuco cephalus)* were found in two localities a few miles apart in upper Manukau and it appears that the sightings were of two distinct birds.

On 10/1/57 when Mr. A. C. Hipwell and I paid a visit to Harania Creek, many Pied Stilts were feeding in the tidal shallows of what, because it runs below a dump of old iron near the Otahuhu railway workshops, local bird-watchers call Scrap-iron Creek. One of the stilts attracted our notice because of its unusual colouring. Its crown was not clear white but brownish or a pale creamy orange; face, throat and breast were of a rich, rusty red, but the lower belly and undertail coverts were almost the normal white. The areas normally black were black.

At first we wondered if the reddish marks were the result of some sort of iron staining such as may sometimes be seen on the heads and necks of Mute Swans *(C. olor)*, when they have been feeding in dirty water. But for a number of reasons this proposition seemed to us untenable. The water in which the Stilts were feeding was tidal and despite the proximity of heaps of rusty iron on the bank above, there were no stagnant pools of rusty water. No other Stilts in the vicinity were stained, but all were typically immaculate and the underparts of the reddish bird were almost white. Lastly, Stilts do not normally feed by dipping the head under the water. We concluded, therefore, that the bird we were watching was a genuine colour sport, an interesting example of erythrism. There is no mention by Buller or Oliver of any such colour variety in Stilts. Some weeks later on 20/2/57, T. G. Ledgard saw this 'reddish' Stilt again in the same creek. From notes made on the spot, A.C.H. subsequently made a charming colour-sketch of this unusual bird.