

On 18/4/57 about 400 Pied Stilts with other waders had gathered at full-tide on the dry mud bottom of the explosion crater below Mangere Mountain. On the edge of them was a partially erythristic stilt quite differently marked from the earlier specimen. It had the gray smudgy markings on the head which are typical of many young Stilts in their first autumn. The reddishness began on the lower neck and was darkest on the belly where it seemed to be about the same shade as the lower band of a male Banded Dotterel (*C. bicinctus*), a rich, deep chestnut. This bird was not seen to be molested by the other Pied Stilts, but it stood apart near the edge of the flock where it was most conspicuous.

If it is permissible to speculate on the occurrence of stilts with reddish markings, one interesting thought which arises is whether there may be a latent tendency towards the development of red feathering in the non-black areas of the tall black-and-white waders. In Australia the Banded Stilt (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*) has a broad, reddish chest band and the Red-necked Avocet (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*), which seems to have attempted to establish itself in New Zealand in the nineteenth century, has a chestnut-coloured head and neck, while in the American Avocet (*R. americana*) these parts are pale rufous or cinnamon.

R. B. SIBSON



KOKAKO IN LAWSON'S CYPRESSES

Waitekauri, an old mining settlement in the Colville Range, ends in half a mile of rough track two miles beyond Golden Cross. Where the heavy bush begins, there is a derelict farm-house with a row of *Cupressus lawsoniana* on the upper side of the track. On 6/6/59 Mr. A. Blackburn and I first heard clicking and sucking notes above us in the cypresses and then a tui-like whistle. After considerable movement of the foliage a single Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*) planed from the trees to the deep gully. No details of plumage could be noted.

On the following day we had better luck when just before noon two Kokako made their way from the gully and remained in close view for about five minutes. Both birds flew across the track, a distance of about thirty feet, with a heavy laboured flight. The first made a very bad landing in a makomako, the second landed more neatly. While under observation the Kokako were seen to feed on the leaves of tawhero, mahoe and possibly kotukutuku. On both days the weather was dull and overcast with intermittent rain and cold winds.

N. HAMERTON



KOKAKO REPORTED FROM WILKIN VALLEY, LAKE WANAKA

On 15/2/58, while I was tramping with two companions down the Wilkin Valley at the head of L. Wanaka, I saw a bird with a dark blue, glossy body colour and a patch of orange below the eye. The bird was on the ground. As we approached, it first fluttered onto a dead trunk about four feet high, and then flew clumsily up the valley at a height of only six feet or so above the ground. The flight was very poor and we thought at first the bird must have been a fledgling.

This incident occurred in the first patch of bush, which was mixed

beech forest on the Wanaka side of the valley, and on the track which follows the river. None of us had ever seen a similar bird before, although we have all done a considerable amount of tramping and climbing in this type of bush country. We had just spent a fortnight in the valley and two of us had also been there in the previous May. It was particularly surprising to see the Orange-wattled Crow (*Callaeas c. cinerea*) where we did, just at the bush-end and where there were only patches of forest with open flats between, with numerous cattle and deer; and not in the dense undisturbed forest at the head of the valley.

On my return to Dunedin I described the bird independently to Dr. R. R. Forster and to Mr. James Watt, who both immediately confirmed my diagnosis as Kokako. I feel that there can be no doubt about the correctness of our identification.

ANN CHAPMAN



SOME INSTANCES OF ANTING BY STARLINGS AND MYNAS

On 27/3/55 I saw two Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) strutting about on the lawn of my Wellington garden about ten yards from the window in a most peculiar manner. At first I thought they were displaying in some way. They seemed to be walking round each other in a small circle, but I soon noticed that they would peck at the ground and then thrust the beak under the wing. I called my wife and she said at once, "They are picking something up from the ground and putting it under their wings." After we had watched them for another seven minutes I went out and examined the ground, and, as I expected, there were ants running about on the spot where the Starlings had been. During the actual process, the birds stood rather upright and lifted the wing without actually spreading it.

On 23/10/55 I again noticed a Starling 'anting' on my lawn in the same place.

E. B. JONES



I was puzzled one day in January when I saw two Starlings acting strangely on the path. They appeared to be preening but in a different way from usual. Then I realised that they were 'anting' and that I was watching something that had been reported in other countries. One bird tried to chase the other away, but it did not move far, only side-stepped and went back to that part of the path where ants were most plentiful. Both birds then 'anted' vigorously for some minutes.

A. PRICKETT



After reading an article about 'anting' by birds in the National Geographic Magazine (July, 1956) I was able to understand the antics of two Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) in a Tauranga garden on 31/10/58. They stood facing each other with beaks almost touching, on the grass by a concrete path, and alternately pecked something off the wet grass and rubbed it from below the wing down the thigh. There were usually many ants at that part of the path. The Mynas were not eating the material which they picked up.

R. V. McLINTOCK