

period of the closely-related Whitehead is recorded by Wilkinson as 17 days on Kapiti. Since Yellowheads and Whiteheads have been placed by some taxonomists among the *paridae*, it is perhaps worth noting that the incubation period of the Great Tit (*Parus major*), a bird of about the same size, is normally only 13-14 days.—Ed.)



RINGED TASMANIAN MUTTON-BIRD RECOVERED IN NEW ZEALAND

Though the ringing programme on the Tasmanian Mutton-bird or Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) has been carried on since 1947, and there have been 13 recoveries of marked birds outside the breeding area, ranging from the New South Wales coast (4 recoveries) to the North Pacific (9 recoveries), there have been none so far from New Zealand. However, there are numerous records of the species as a transit migrant in New Zealand waters, and young birds, some still with down adhering to the feathers, are not infrequently washed ashore on the western coasts in May.

The first recovery of a marked bird has now been reported by Mr. Reg. Williams of Napier, president of the Hawke's Bay Naturalists' Club. Mr. Williams, who is honorary warden of the Cape Kidnappers Gannet Sanctuary, found the bird at Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay, on December 26, 1959, it being in a decomposed condition. This bird, bearing ring No. 29450, had been ringed by me as a fledgling in its burrow at Babel Island, near Flinders Island, Tasmania, on March 24, 1959, and hence was almost a year old.

Immature birds do not make a landfall on their nesting islands until they are three years of age, and they are seen there only between mid-January and mid-March (Serventy, "The banding programme on *Puffinus tenuirostris*," *C.S.I.R.O. Wildl. Res.* 2 (1), 1957: 51). Sufficient recoveries of marked birds have been made, however, which suggest that a portion at least of the younger age-groups share in the north-south migration of the older birds. Thus 29450 was returning from its first visit to the North Pacific when it perished in the Hawke's Bay area. It is of interest to record that another fledgling bird of its age group, No. 29752, ringed at the same time on the same island only a few chains distant, was recovered on July 20, 1959, on a Japanese fishing boat in the North Pacific at Lat. 45° 39' N., Long. 155° 40' E. Surviving members of this age group will not come ashore at their home islands until January, 1962.

D. L. SERVenty



RARE BIRDS AT FAREWELL SPIT

(a) *Tree Martins*

While I was working on the lighthouse at Farewell Spit on the afternoon of 14/1/60, McKiddee called my attention to two small birds which were flying around the pine tree next to the tower. My first impression was that they were swallows, but on closer observation I saw that their tails were not deeply forked, as I expected. The forehead

was light brown; head, neck, back and part of wings blue black; tail brown; underside of wings and body buff-coloured; beak small and tail almost square. I was quite unable to say what these birds were.

On the next day Mr. B. D. Bell arrived at the lighthouse and when I described these birds to him, he concluded that they must be Tree Martins (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) from Australia.

A. WRIGHT

(According to Sharland, the Tree Martin is a common summer visitor to Tasmania, arriving in late August and early September. After the breeding season they form flocks which may contain hundreds of birds. Young birds are more prone to wander than adults. From time to time Tree Swallows reach New Zealand. The earliest records come from the province of Nelson. In 1851 a flock appeared at Whakapunaka and in 1856 one was reported at Cape Farewell. If there were an ornithological observatory at Farewell Spit, there is little doubt that there would be many interesting reports of stragglers from Australia.—Ed.)

(b) Wrybills

On the afternoon of 15/1/60 we had visited the shelly banks where many waders gather at full tide on Farewell Spit and we were returning to the lighthouse when we noticed ten Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) among the dunnage and seaweed cast up by the tide. Near them on the edge of the seaweed were three Wrybills (*Anarhynchus frontalis*). This seems to be the first time these small plovers have been reported on Farewell Spit, though one was seen at Paturau, about twenty miles to the south, on 20/1/59 (v. *Notornis* VIII, 164).

A. WRIGHT

B. D. BELL

(Many Wrybills are moving north in January. It is likely that some pause on Farewell Spit every year.—Ed.)

(c) Crested Tern

On the morning of 17/1/60 Ian Hogarth and I were returning from the lighthouse on Farewell Spit. The weather was fine with a very strong wind from the north-west. After about 1½ hours' walking we came upon a group of about 50 White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*) resting on the hard sand of the outer beach. I "glassed" them from about twenty yards to see if any of them carried bands and immediately noticed a stranger amongst them.

This bird, obviously a tern, was half as big again as the White-fronted Terns. It had a narrow yellow bill and black (or dark) legs. The forehead was white. The crown, sides of head to below the eye and nape were black. The eye or feathers around the eye were whitish.

The back and wing coverts were dark ashy grey and the primaries appeared darker. The secondaries were dark grey edged with white. The neck and undersurface were white. After taking down notes of the above features we checked them with a telescope (x 25) and found the bird was banded with an aluminium band on the right leg.

The flock rose when we approached closer and it was then noted that the tail was pale grey and deeply forked. The secondaries had a white trailing edge and there was a small whitish spot near the carpal flexure. The bird swung out over the sea and flew with its bill pointed down. It was seen to swoop down to the surface and pick something up. At no time did it call.

I consulted Oliver (1955) on return and found that the bird was a Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*). One feature we had not noted in our field notes was the elongated crown-feathers mentioned in the literature. Actually, however, we had noted this feature, rather like the raised feathers of an irate Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) but had not written it down as we had thought the strong wind was causing it. The Crested Tern has only twice been recorded in New Zealand, one being shot at the Kermadecs in 1910 and another, a corpse, being picked up at Spirits Bay in 1951.

B. D. BELL

(This constitutes the first living record in New Zealand proper of this common Australian tern.—Ed.)



SUCCESSFUL BREEDING OF WELCOME SWALLOWS IN NORTHLAND

Welcome Swallows (*H. neoxena*) seem to be establishing themselves in the Kawakawa district. In one area there are six birds, and in mid-January, 1960, one pair were re-nesting after already bringing out a brood. The six, therefore, may be a family party. The nest is high up under a concrete bridge and not easy to study.

About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles further north I have seen eight swallows sitting on the roof of a barn. No nests have been found, but they could be inside the barn, which has a gap of six inches between the wall and the roof. As the barn is full of hay and very high, it is impossible to look inside. The farmer states that he has seen twelve birds here. In this locality the swallows are quite fearless and will fly within a few feet when the yard is being swept. By their actions I think that some of these birds are preparing to nest again.

H. A. FINDLAY

On the afternoon of 20/1/60 when we were at Tokerau on the east coast of the peninsula between Doubtless Bay and Rangaunu Bay, we noticed a Welcome Swallow dart out from beneath a small wooden bridge which crossed a slow-flowing stream. As we walked towards the bridge an adult swallow circled round in some agitation, all the time twittering. Under the bridge we found three nests. In one, which was