

bubble along one side of the lake and up the little valley; and there is a smell of sulphur in the air. Here we were able to watch two Welcome Swallows. Much of their time was spent flitting or skimming over the water, but occasionally they flew low over a grassy slope recently broken in from gumland. Sometimes they flew together in playful chases. Their favourite perches were the tops of two stakes near the middle of the lake. They also alighted frequently and rested on the mud at the edge. One of the Swallows was an adult with long tail-streamers and much red on face and throat; the other, less brightly marked and with a shorter tail, appeared to be a young bird of this season. From time to time a passing House Sparrow would vainly try to chivvy them.

Mr. J. P. Baker, the manager of the Spa Hotel, informed me that he had first noticed Welcome Swallows over Lake Tuwhakino about four months ago; sometimes there were three, sometimes none; they would be missing for a few days and then return. He was hoping they would eat the sandflies which were only too prevalent around the lake.

Ngawha Springs is about ten miles distant from Kawakawa where Welcome Swallows bred successfully last summer (Notornis VIII, 262). These Swallows are evidently hardy enough to survive the colder months in the 'winterless north'; and it appears that a resident stock is becoming established. Other suitable waters where they are likely to occur near Kaikohe are Lakes Owhareiti and Omapere.

R. B. SIBSON



#### ANTING BY STARLINGS AT ROTORUA

On 28/1/60 my wife and I had an opportunity of watching Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) indulging in this strange practice. Looking out of the window on to the back lawn, we noticed a family party, consisting of two adults and three youngsters all in varying stages of moult, diligently "working" a small patch of newly-mown lawn. At first, we thought that they were feeding on the grass-grub, which has been prevalent this summer, when I suddenly realised that we were at last actually eye-witnesses of "anting," something which we had never seen before. The modus operandi was as follows:— The Starlings would pick up not one, but several ants, raise a wing, push the bill laden with ants under the wing, pressing the bill and wing hard against the body, then quickly withdraw the bill, to repeat the operation on the other wing. Having done this, the birds would then fluff their feathers, assume a crouching stance and what appeared to be a most rapturous expression, before resuming the hunt for more victims. This behaviour was watched from a window at a distance of twenty feet for at least ten minutes. How long the Starlings had been doing this, or how long it would have continued I cannot say, as a neighbour's cat terminated the proceedings by flushing the operators. On examination of the lawn I found a colony of the small red ant of an individual length of eight millimetres.

M. J. S. BLACK



#### GREENSHANK NEAR INVERCARGILL

On 10/3/56, a grey morning of light, misty rain, we found a Greenshank (*T. nebularia*) resting on the Awarua shellbank slightly