

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

apart from a mixed flock of waders, mainly Bar-tailed Godwits. Compared with the latter, it was noticeably smaller, slimmer and predominantly grey above, white beneath, including forehead, face and chin.

In flight, the diagnostic white inverted V of tail, rump and back was conspicuous and the feet projected beyond the tail. Its call, uttered frequently both in flight and while feeding, was a clear strident "choo," descending in pitch. Some references seem to imply that this "choo" is made in rapid sequences of three, but this was seldom so, two or four being usual.

When feeding, either solitarily or among Pied Stilts, the bird ran gracefully through the water, its bill and neck stretched forward, lifting its feet daintily above the surface.

The bird was again seen on 15th and 31st March, in sunny conditions. It was again in the company of Pied Stilts and all diagnostic features, including the greenish legs, were confirmed.

This at 46½°S. appears to be the southernmost Greenshank recorded in New Zealand, perhaps in the world.

B. D. HEATHER
R. M. ROYDS

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WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN AT INVERCARGILL

During a visit to Invercargill in March, 1956, a White-winged Black Tern (*C. leucopterus*) was found to be present at Lake Hawkins. The bird was assuming breeding plumage. Field notes, sketches and colour photographs show that its body, head and upper wing were as illustrated by Fleming (*Notornis* VI, 71) and that its underwing was heavily mottled with black.

The bird was not seen to associate with the Black-fronted Terns (*C. albstriatus*) which were frequent visitors to Lake Hawkins. It was present at least from March 13th to 25th. On March 18th it was seen by B. A. Ellis.

B. D. HEATHER

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WEKAS IN NORTHLAND

The North Island Weka (*G. australis greyi*) was formerly abundant in Northland, but of recent years no definite sightings have been recorded. During a period of work in this district during the winter of 1959, I made the following observations:

Two Wekas were flushed by my dog on the bush edge behind Waima on 4/7/59. Another indefinite sighting of a Weka was made on the banks of the Waihoihoi Stream, Waipu, on 8/8/59; and after enquiries were made, a local farmer, Mr. McLeod Finlayson, reported he had heard recently two Wekas, the first for a number of years.

Two other areas where this species has been reported present recently, but as yet not confirmed, are Onerahi (between Okaihau and Rangiahau) and near Waiotira.

R. T. ADAMS

(Some reported sightings of Wekas in northern New Zealand, especially near mangroves, cannot be accepted, the birds concerned obviously being Banded Rails (*R. philippensis*). However, the older residents near Waipu and Whangarei knew the Weka well and clearly remember its distinctive call.—Ed.)