During the recent (1960) winter, Welcome Swallows stayed in the district again; and as there are considerably more than last year, other clutches must have been reared successfully somewhere. On one occasion seventeen were counted sitting on power-lines.

So far this spring four nests have been built on the two concrete bridges. One pair had already reared a clutch of three chicks by October 18; and another pair had five eggs. The Cherrington children, who live near one of the bridges and who watch the nests closely, tell me that the swallows seem to lay one egg every other day and that the chicks appear about three weeks after the laying of th first egg. The nests are built with a mixture of mud and dry grass. To build, the swallows stick a big piece of mud to the wall and leave it to harden. Then they add soft mud and use their feet to press dry grass into it. They continue doing this till they have built the solid part of the nest. The inside is lined with feathers. The local swallows seem to prefer pheasant feathers, if they can find them.

Some of the children reported that the swallows were flying up to a cowshed to feed on skim-milk curds. But what I think they are doing is catching the little insects which are found on the curd and which are disturbed when the curd is scattered.

Through the watchfulness of the children, it seems that there will be every chance that the colony of Welcome Swallows at Waiomio will again increase this year.

— C. E. SHANKS

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## OLD AND RECENT NESTING RECORDS OF PETRELS IN TARANAKI

An early reference to muttonbirds breeding inland is to be found under the date 5/12/1846 in the diary of Richard Taylor. He was making a cross-country trip from the Patea to the middle Wanganui, and after crossing the Makaau Stream, which appears on modern maps as Makahu ("h" was silent in the Wanganui dialect) he came to a pa Mangaehu in the Matemateonga Range. The portion of the day's diary entry reads: "The pa is close to a beautiful clear stream in which I took a bathe. Opposite the pa is a small island in the river on which stands the remains of a pa. It is connected with the mainland by a pole which is tied to two trees which incline partly over the river. In the evening there was quite a deafening noise from vast numbers of birds flying about; I found on enquiry it was the *titi* which is remarkable as being both a sea-bird and a night-bird as well. The natives take large numbers of them by lighting a fire on top of some lofty precipice. The birds, they say, mistake it for the crest of a wave and alight close to it when they are knocked down with sticks. They are spoken of as being very fat and delicious eating."

Taylor kept a day-to-day diary on his travels, and in spite of the loss of old place-names, the positions of his camps can generally be determined within a few miles by topography, distance travelled, and such names as have survived. Mangaehu is on the fringe of settlement and from here to the headwaters of the Waitotara River there is still a large, nearly virgin, forest which might be a suitable area for searching for inland-breeding muttonbirds.

— A. D. MEAD

(Richard Taylor, M.A. (Cantab.), came to New Zealand in 1839 to serve with the Church Missionary Society. He was a man of many gifts, a competent artist and an energetic traveller with a lively and discerning interest in geology and natural history. The curious root-parasite *Dactylanthus taylori* bears his name.—Ed.)

In February, 1958, a burrow containing a downy young petrel, obviously of one of the larger summer-breeding species, was found near Goat Rock at c. 1500ft. a.s.l. in the Kaitake Ranges, five miles inland and ten miles from New Plymouth. The young petrel was photographed in colour; and when the slide was shown at the Annual General Meeting in the following May, it was identified as a Black Petrel *(Procellaria parkinsoni).*

Subsequent searches have failed to reveal a burrow or burrows; and it may be that owing to faulty information, the precise locality of the burrow in which the young petrel was found has not been rediscovered .

—D. MEDWAY

(This interesting record is not as surprising as at first appears. The breeding range of the Black Petrel was formerly much more extensive than it is to-day. It is now known to breed only at Little Barrier in the north and the Heaphy Range in the south. These are at the ends of a now broken chain, the links of which were suitable inland ridges. It is gratifying to learn that one link in the chain of breeding colonies may still persist in the ranges of Taranaki. Taylor's *titi* (*v. supra*) may well have been *P. parkinsoni.*—Ed.)

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## SUCCESSFUL LATE BREEDING OF PIED STILTS NEAR AUCKLAND

From observations made over several years in the Firth of Thames and near Clevedon, it is known that in northern New Zealand Pied Stilts *(H. leucocephalus)* may have an extended breeding season. Most eggs are laid between August and October; but Stokes, McKenzie and others (*Notornis* VIII, 95-99) have described how in the very wet winter of 1956 many nests contained eggs as early as the middle of June and before the end of July. As a general rule few eggs are laid after the end of October.

On the Auckland isthmus the Pied Stilt has rarely been known to breed, although many thousands find the tidal flats and creeks of the isthmus a rich feeding ground in winter. However, in 1959 a perfect breeding habitat was provided by the artificial lakes which have recently been formed at Puketutu. At the normal nesting season at least twelve pairs bred on the northern bays of Puketutu along the edge of Spoonbill Pool (v. map, *Notornis* VIII, 221) and though there was a certain amount of disturbance from boys, Black-backed Gulls, which were continually on the prowl, and the aerial spraying of insecticide, a satisfactory number of young reached the flying stage by the end of November.

Meanwhile on the cool southern side of Puketutu, another suitable habitat for breeding was coming into existence as the waters of Oruarangi formed a lake with wide shallows behind a new sea-wall.