Here in mid-February, 1960, Mr. B. D. Bell reported that he found two broods of Pied Stilts, one of which was only just feathering. On 23/3/60, when Peter Skegg and I visited this quiet corner, we found what must have been an even later brood of three, two of which could just fly, while the third could not and resorted to swimming. It was carried out into deep water and covered about a quarter of a mile before it was re-united with the rest of the family.

Stokes and McKenzie have shown that with normal spring nests the average incubation period from laying of the last egg is 25 days and the fledging period 31-32 days. Under the favourable conditions of summer 1960, hatching and fledging times are unlikely to have been longer than average. If, therefore, the clock is put back 57 days from March 23, the date for the completion of the clutch is January 26, and the first egg was almost certainly laid after January 20.

The only comparable record of late breeding with Pied Stilts, that I know, is of a pair at Kaiaua in the Firth of Thames, which were in attendance on two fresh eggs on a shelly sea-beach on 24/1/48. The birds were evidently forced by the heat to abandon nesting; for on 7/2/48 the deserted eggs were still in the nest, sun-bleached and with their contents fried.

R. B. SIBSON

★

HUDSONIAN GODWIT AT THE MANAWATU ESTUARY

The Hudsonian Godwit *(Limosa haemastica)* has been recorded on several occasions at Lake Ellesmere (Oliver, 1955) and it had seemed surprising to me that this species had not been recorded in other suitable localities between this area and the Auckland area, where it is fairly regularly observed. The west coast of the Wellington Province, for instance, with its estuaries frequented in summer by fair numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits *(Limosa lapponica baueri)* would appear to be an ideal place to look for it.

When visiting the Manawatu Estuary on 1/11/59 I flushed a small party of godwits feeding on the ebbing tide and was immediately attracted by the leading godwit, which had a black and white tail, the black part being distal. Unfortunately I did not have binoculars with me, but I confirmed that it was a form of Black-tailed Godwit when I flushed it again. It then flew to the opposite side of the estuary and was not seen again.

The estuary was regularly and frequently visited by myself and I. G. Andrew during the summer, but on no occasion were we able to make a detailed study of all the 280+ godwits present, mainly because the river acted as a barrier. Thus this godwit may have been present throughout the summer, although this cannot be proved.

On 26/3/60 I visited the estuary and was fortunate enough to find the remaining godwits, 120 in all, roosting on the north side at high tide. I approached the flock to about 20-30 yards, and studied them closely through 8 x 30 binoculars. Soon I noticed a trim godwit amongst the Bar-tails. It was about the size of a small male of that species. It had a more even grey-brown upper surface than the Bar-tails, the grey-brown extending right round the neck and on to the upper breast. This godwit was assuming summer plumage, there being mottlings of wine-red on the breast and flanks.

The flock was flushed and I was immediately able to identify the godwit subspecifically as a Hudsonian Godwit. As it flew up the black and white tail was seen, and an irregular, narrow buff-white wing bar. The flock flew round in a half-circle and settled a short distance away. As it did so the black axillaries and underwing of this godwit were outstanding. I referred to the article by Sibson on the subspecies of the Black-tailed Godwit which occur in New Zealand (*Notornis* VIII, 161-2) on the spot and confirmed the identification. In addition to the points mentioned in that article I noted that this godwit had a blackish-brown culmen and a dark brown stripe through the eye from the bill, bordered by a buff-white stripe above and below.

When the estuary was next visited on 2/4/60, I. G. Andrew and I discovered that only about 70 godwits remained, and a thorough search revealed no Hudsonian Godwit. However, as I again saw a Hudsonian Godwit at the estuary on 4/7/60, it is evidently wintering in the vicinity. This appears to be the first record of a Hudsonian Godwit for the province of Wellington.

M. J. IMBER

★

THE KINGFISHER AS A PREDATOR

A Kingfisher *(Halycon sanctus)* which visits our garden in Levin often perches on a post watching the Blackbirds *(T. merula)* and Songthrushes *(T. ericetorum)* digging up worms on the lawn. When a large worm is caught, the Kingfisher may dart down and steal it. Recently I received a Kingfisher with a damaged wing. When the wing was stronger, the bird was released but could not fly normally. At least six of the local Blackbirds and Thrushes, evidently recognising a Kingfisher as a predator and an enemy, eagerly seized the opportunity to get some of their own back and darted down, scolding angrily and flying in low circles over the weakened Kingfisher as it half-flew, half-ran across the lawn. Perhaps out of respect for its beak, they did not actually assault it. The Blackbirds were the prime movers in the demonstration of hostility.

AVIS ACRES

Whilst working in my garden I noticed some Silvereyes *(Zosterops lateralis)* feeding in the hedge. A few minutes later I heard one give a cry of distress, and thinking the cat had caught it, I went to investigate. As I approached the hedge, a Kingfisher flew out with a Silvereye in its bill. It settled in a peach-tree and started to batter its victim on a bough, as I had previously seen a Kingfisher treat a mouse. The battering apparently had little effect at first for the Silvereye was still fluttering and screaming when the Kingfisher flew off with it.

A. G. FLOREY

(Oliver (1955 p. 530) discusses the fearless ferocity of the Kingfisher and remarks that "every kind of small animal is attacked, killed and eaten." To the varied diet which he lists may be added the ducklings of the New Zealand Scaup *(A. novaeseelandiae)*. The taking of these by Kingfishers has been observed near the jetty at L. Okataina, Rotorua.—Ed.)