Sign of *Rattus norvegicus* was found and on the night of 11th November three specimens were trapped. The island was over-run by these pests, which evidently swam ashore when a launch was wrecked on the western coast about 25 years ago.

Blue Penguins *(E. minor)* were nesting in large numbers in all parts of the island, and several hundred were ashore on the night of my visit. Nests contained eggs or young of varying ages.

Nine shag nests were found in low taupata on the south ridge. One contained two newly hatched chicks and a chipped egg, while the remaining nests were unoccupied, but thirteen adult Black Shags *(P. carbo)* were nearby.

About 500 Black-backed Gull nests were scattered over the lower slopes of the island, a few containing newly hatched chicks, while others had between one and three eggs in them. Two Harriers *(C. approximans)* were seen, and a nest with three eggs found in high flax.

Starlings were found nesting on holes on the sheer western cliffs, while a small number roosted at night in the tall taupata and flax near the summit. Blackbirds were heard and an old nest found. One Dunnock *(P. modularis)* was also heard singing.

It was rather disappointing to find so few petrels nesting on the only island between Portland Island, off Mahia Peninsula, and Cook Strait, but nevertheless Bare Island is obviously well used by other sea-birds for nesting, and is of particular value as a penguin breeding ground.

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# SHORT NOTES

## RED-NECKED STINT IN BREEDING PLUMAGE AT THE RANGITIKEI ESTUARY DURING THE SUMMER OF 1959-60

Red-necked Stints *(Calidris ruficollis)* were first recorded at the Rangitikei Estuary during the summer of 1958-9 by I. G. Andrew (*Notornis* VIII, 193), but during the succeeding summer they were recorded in greater numbers. On 6/12/59 four, or a possible seven, were counted there and on 1/1/60 seven were located.

On this occasion, much to my surprise, one of the Stints was distinctly reddish on the neck. On each side of the foreneck there was an area of deep rufous with a narrow area down the middle of the foreneck, the throat and sides of the upper foreneck and cheeks pale rufous. The chin and base of the forehead were whitish; the crown and hind neck grey-brown streaked darker. I visited the estuary again on 3/1/60 with I. G. Andrew and we confirmed my previous observations.

From information subsequently received from Mr. H. R. McKenzie this type of plumage pattern was evidently that of a bird moulting from breeding to non-breeding plumage.

The estuary was next visited on 9/1/60, by which time the number of stints had increased to eleven. The aberrant bird had changed little apart from an apparent paling of the deep rufous areas. It was also noticed on this occasion that the upper back was mottled pale rufous and grey-brown.

On 24/1/60 the foreneck was a uniform pale rufous, with rufous mottling still present on the upper back. The throat was paler and was seen to be flecked whitish when the bird preened itself. By 14/2/60 the colouring on the foreneck had receded to an area of pale rufous on each side of the upper foreneck. The forehead was whitish, and a narrow area down the centre of the foreneck was off-white. An area on each side of the lower foreneck was greyish streaked darker, the remainder of the underparts being white as normal. All rufous had disappeared from the upperparts which were now greyish-brown streaked black on crown and back. I. G. Andrew informed me that there was little change in this pattern on 26/2/60.

After this visit there was the possibility of some confusion with other Stints assuming breeding plumage, but the next visit on 20/3/60 revealed only one of the nine Stints located with a touch of colouring. This was believed to be the aberrant bird as the upper part of its head and its hind neck were pale grey streaked black, the grey being much paler than had been seen in any of the other Stints previously. There was a very small area of rufous buff on the sides of the upper foreneck and grey streaked darker on the sides of the lower foreneck, the remainder of the underparts, forehead and face being white.

The last visit made on 5/4/60 revealed three of the ten remaining Stints assuming breeding plumage, whilst the bird presumed to be the aberrant one had no more colouring than a small buffish area below the cheeks.

This is a somewhat similar case to that of the Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit *(Limosa melanuroides)* observed in the Firth of Thames from 1952-6 by Sibson and others (*Notornis* VI, 241-2), but the Stint had begun to moult before the beginning of January, whereas the Godwit did not moult until the end of February or March.

The "Encyclopaedia of British Birds" states that the autumn moult may be abnormally delayed when a bird has not mated. This could have been the case with the Stint, whereas the breeding mechanism of the Godwit had undoubtedly been completely reversed.

It will be interesting to see, however, if a Red-necked Stint in out-of-season plumage is observed in New Zealand next summer, as this could well be the same bird as was seen at the Rangitikei Estuary.

M. J. IMBER

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## FEMALE BLUE DUCK APPARENTLY PAIRED WITH PARADISE DRAKE

On 19/1/61 while climbing in the upper Hunter region (headwaters of Lake Hawea) a female Blue Duck *(Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus)* was seen apparently mated with a male Paradise *(Casarca variegata)*. The characteristic whistling of the Blue Duck was heard first, on a small flat close to the mountain stream about 35 miles from the head of Lake Hawea. It was approached to within about 25 yards, viewed through glasses, and followed along the river bank for a few yards. No answering calls were heard and, on looking about for its mate, we were surprised to find the male Paradise hiding behind some rocks. He made no audible reply to the whistles. No other ducks were seen in this part of the valley.

P. CHILD