

ANNUAL LOCALITY REPORTS

FIRTH OF THAMES

BLACK SHAG — 42 on summer census 27/11/60; c. 330 on 6/6/61 just south of Miranda; 187 on winter census 2/7/61.

WHITE-FACED HERON — Up to 16, Kaiaua to Kairito, Dec.-Jan.; "17 together on 12/7/61 and 15/7/61. More than I have seen here before. Every day I see them flying inland, but have not yet located a nest." (A.T.).

BLUE HERON — 1 at Whakatiwai on 2/7/61.

PARADISE DUCK — Miranda, 26/1/60, 2 on farm (A. Todd).

SHOVELER — 9 at Miranda Creek on 2/7/61.

BANDED RAIL — Not uncommon. Many sightings. Young seen on 27/11/60.

S.I. PIED OYSTERCATCHER — 92+ on 14/10/60 at Whakatiwai; 109 on summer census 27/11/60; 146 on 10/1/61; 630+ on 7/3/61, 21/3/61 and 21/5/61; c. 760 on 6/6/61; 1280 (incl. 150 at Piako and 60 at Thames) on winter census, 2/7/61.

VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER — 3 black at White Bridge on 25/1/61.

ASIATIC GOLDEN PLOVER — 85 on rough ploughland at Waitakaruru on summer census 27/11/60.

BANDED DOTTEREL — 4 nests found. c. 30 on summer census 27/11/60. Kaiaua-Kairito, 26+ on 7/1/61; c. 400 on 7/3/61 in in Kairito 'turnip' marsh; 60 on winter census 2/7/61, (Kaiaua 45, Parawai 15).

RED-BREASTED DOTTEREL — Up to 5 between Kaiaua and Miranda. Nest, 3 eggs on 22/12/60.

LARGE SAND DOTTEREL — One closely watched on 24 & 26/1/61 by P.D.G.S. and D.G.F. in the Kairito turnip marsh. It was among Wrybills as was the one seen in the same place during Jan.-Feb., 1960.

WRYBILL — c. 150 at White Bridge on 14/10/60; but rather fewer are known to have summered, viz:— 42 on 24/11/60 and 65 on the census, 27/11/60. Numbers rapidly increased in January, 400 on 10/1/61; 2000+ on 24/1/61 in Kairito turnip marsh. In autumn and winter, numbers exceeded all counts made over the last twenty years e.g., 4000+ on 7/3/61 and c. 4,500 on 21/3/61; though the census on 2/7/61 reached only 2,500; but on 2/8/61, the count was 3,450 and on 31/8/61 there were still many more than 3000. On all instances counts were carefully checked, usually by several observers.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW — The biggest flock so far recorded, 18, was seen on 27/11/60 and 24/1/61. 4 on 21/3/61 and 6/6/61; 6 on winter census, 2/7/61. Some were usually to be found between Miranda and Waitakaruru.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT — The usual thousands arrived in spring. Census on 27/11/60 gave 9,650 for the whole firth; Winter census c. 900 on 2/7/61.

ASIATIC BLACK-TAILED GODWIT — 1 on 3/9/60; 2 on 25/1/61.

TURNSTONE — During the summer more were recorded on the Kaiaua-Kairito coast than ever before:— 31 on 25/10/60; 48 on 24 & 27/11/60; 76 on 22/12/60; 56 on 7/1/61; 67+ on 21/3/61; 42 on winter census 2/7/61.

KNOT — The usual thousands arrived in the spring. Summer census 7,320 on 27/11/60; winter census, 590 on 2/7/61.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER — 1 on Miranda pools on 14/10/60; 5 on 27/11/60; 16 on 7/3/61 and 21/3/61, all well into breeding plumage.

CURLEW SANDPIPER — A flock of 8 and probably 3 others at Waitakaruru on 27/11/60; 1 well-reddened and 9 others in Kairito turnip marsh on 27/1/61; 8 on 21/3/61, 6 well-reddened, 2 pale.

RED-NECKED STINT — 3 on 25/10/60, 5 on 24/11/60; odd ones throughout summer; 2 on 25/1/61; 1 on 21/3/61.

PIED STILT — Some nests at pools still contained eggs in mid-Oct. 16 flying young on Miranda pools on 25/10/60. A pair at Kairito had hidden young in late November. Kaiaua-Miranda, 140 on 24/11/60; summer census, 920 for coast of firth in 27/11/60. After nesting, many birds from the Hauraki Plains move down to the tidal flats and creeks. Winter census on 2/7/61, 4,695, with probably many more inland on flooded paddocks. An almost black stilt was at Miranda on 2/8/61.

ARCTIC SKUA — 2 dark birds off Miranda on 24/11/60; 4 off Whakatiwai on 10/1/61 and 2 on 7/3/61.

BLACK-BACKED GULL — At the Kairito shell-bank on 25/10/60 9 nests had three eggs, 5 two and 6 one; but a new colony north of the old limeworks had 10 nests without eggs. Later there were 14 nests in the new colony.

BLACK-BILLED GULL — 80+ on 25/10/60; 31 on 27/11/60 were evidently summering non-breeders; 90 on 21/3/61; c. 400 on 21/5/61; 480+ on 6/6/61; 335 on winter census, 2/7/61.

CASPIAN TERN — There is still no known instance of breeding on the west and south coasts of the firth. 74 on summer census, 27/11/60; 95 on winter census, 2/7/61.

WHITE-FRONTED TERN — 1000+ noisy and excited at the road-corner colony and one broken egg found 25/10/60; but this site was subsequently abandoned. On 27/11/60 c. 250 pairs were nesting on the Kairito shell-bank. 22/12/60, c. 1000 birds, c. 500 chicks. Nests with eggs 500+. Mortality among chicks was high, e.g., 71 dead on 24/1/61 and many more a few days later. Winter census 143.

TERN (Sp.?) — Once again small *albifrons*-like terns haunted the south-east corner of the firth during the summer. 4 at Waitakaruru on 27/11/60 and 26/1/61.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN — From time to time one appeared over the Miranda pools. Some of its visits were very brief. On 14/10/60 it was in a very worn breeding dress but with some black left under the wings and on the sides of the body. On 7/1/60 it appeared to be wholly in eclipse. By 27/1/61 it was blackening again. On 21/5/61 and 6/6/61 it was in full breeding plumage. What was evidently the same bird was well seen over the shallows between Kairito and Waitakaruru on 2/7/61.

— H.R.McK., R.B.S.