

aviary, to be delivered to the nest later either by himself or by the female. Some three weeks after the young left the nest the male became so pugnacious that the whole family had to be separated.

The keeping of native birds in captivity is illegal, and these birds were confiscated by the authorities and released. It is to be hoped that those responsible will bear in mind the important and so far uninvestigated question of the distribution of the different sub-species of birds throughout our group of islands, and make sure that if birds are released it is only done in the locality from which they came.

The pamphlet concludes with a discussion of the attitude of the Department of Internal Affairs towards the keeping of native birds in captivity, and the bearing of the whole matter on the broad question of the protection of birds in this country. The pamphlet is illustrated by two excellent photographs of robins taken by the author.

THE EMU.—Vol. xli., pt. 4, April, 1942

The latest number of the Emu, just received, contains one New Zealand paper, "Supplementary Notes on the Royal Albatross, Part II.", by L. E. Richdale, which gives further details of the author's study of the nesting colony of these birds on Otago Peninsular. Among several papers on Australian birds there are two of general interest which may be mentioned, "The usurpation of nests, nesting sites and materials" by N. Favaloro, and "Nest borrowing amongst birds," by P. A. Bourke. The subjects of these are indicated by their titles, and, though the examples given will be unfamiliar species to New Zealand ornithologists, perhaps similar behaviour will be noted in this country. Amongst the reviews is one of a paper by E. Mayr and D. Amadon on "*Demigretta sacra* (Gmelin)." Amer. Mus. Nov. No. 1144, Oct. 13th, 1941, with map. An appeal was made in the second annual report of this Society to members to send in notes on the Blue Heron in connection with this study by Dr. Mayr. This bird has a white phase as well as the dark one, but in S. Australia and New Zealand the birds are almost exclusively dark. There is a suggestion that the New Zealand population originated from S. Australia.

3.

INVESTIGATION OF THE BREEDING SEASON OF THE BLACKBIRD AND THE WHITE-EYE.

The object of this investigation is to collect accurate information about the breeding habits of these birds and especially to determine the effect of geographical position, that is to say of different lengths of day, upon the dates of breeding. Observations are therefore required from all parts of the country, especially from the extreme north and extreme south. Everyone will have some information even if only a few dates, so send in whatever you have no matter how scanty. Preliminary breeding activities have already begun, but much remains to be noted if members remember to look out for it and to note it down. Exact dates are required for early and late singing, fights (the sexes involved to be noted), nest building, egg laying, hatching and fledging of young. Also details of the number of eggs laid and hatched and of young fledged, and the number of nests built by the same pair. Please send in notes to Count Wodzicki, The Consulate General of Poland, Wellington or to Professor Marples, The Museum, Dunedin. Fuller information about the investigation will be gladly sent on request. We want as many reliable dates as possible, so please make notes and send them in.

WHITE HERONS IN THE OKARITO DISTRICT,

by R. A. FALLA.

In December, 1941, the writer was given an opportunity of accompanying the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Westland, and a representative of the Conservator of Forests, on a visit of inspection to the only known nesting area of the White Heron.

The area is in swampy country north of the Okarito Lagoon and conditions there many years ago are described in published records of Mueller, Potts and other observers.

The object of the recent visit was to determine the position of the nesting colony, to estimate the nesting requirements of the birds, so that these might be taken into account when milling and other industrial claims in the district were being regulated. Full details of these matters have been submitted to the Government and measures for the proper protection of the herons are likely to be taken. The present communication therefore deals only with the general status of the colony and the habits of the birds as observed.

On the day of our visit, 11th December, 1941, no White Herons were observed at Okarito township nor at such parts of the lagoon as we could see on the journey northward. There were, however, in the neighbourhood of Okarito township several White-faced Herons (*Notophox novaehollandiae*). After careful enquiry from a number of residents I am satisfied that the common "Blue Crane" of South Westland is not *Demigretta sacra*, which is practically unknown, but *Notophox novaehollandiae*. It seems likely that it has been a common breeding species there during the whole period of European settlement, and before, and that it has somewhat similar winter dispersal habits to those of the White Heron. Local observers consider that it has always been a much more plentiful bird than the White Heron.

4.

The nesting place of the White Heron was found by our party on the banks of the stream on which earlier observers have found heronries. The present site is, however, somewhat lower downstream than the earlier records. As seems invariably the case, the herons are associated with and outnumbered by nesting shags of the small species (White-throated and little Pied Shags, *Phalacrocorax brevirostris* and *P. melanoleucus* which may be considered as one species). Of the latter there were some 11 nests in use and of the herons four nests. The creek is wide at this point and all the nests were in low trees, the shags in kamahi and kowhai and the herons on the crown of tree ferns (black and silver punga) overhanging the water and well sheltered from wind by the tall stands of kahikatea behind and around them. The nesting season was much further advanced than we had expected to find it. Eight adult birds in ornamental nesting plumes were present, two young from one nest were already flying strongly, two more were able to fly but not well, another was able to leave the nest and scramble about, and only one, in down, was still in the nest. The first eggs in this colony must therefore have been laid in September. The shags had well-grown young nearly able to fly. It is evident that the main nesting requirements are suitable trees adjacent to open space over water and high permanent shelter from wind. Food can be brought from a distance by both shags and herons.

There is little doubt that a few more herons may nest wherever the small shags form an undisturbed colony in sheltered places, and I was reliably informed of one heron nest about four years ago with shags at Canoe Point on the Okarito. However, such conditions are now rare in the district and the present area must be considered the only suitable place.

BIRDS ON ISLANDS AROUND STEWART ISLAND. By E. Stead.

(Notes made during visit between November 28 and December 3, 1941.)

GREEN ISLAND.

FANTAIL (Pied) (*Rhipidura flabellifera*). Not plentiful. Broods of young seen late November, 1941.

GREY WARBLER (*Pseudogerygone igata*). Not plentiful.

WAX-EYE (*Zosterops halmaturina*). Not plentiful.

YELLOWHEAD PARRAKEET (*Cyanoramphus auriceps*). A few dozens.