

- FULLAGAR, P. J.; DISNEY, H. J. de S. 1981. Discriminant functions for sexing woodhens. *Corella* 5, in press.
- GILL, H. B. 1970. Birds of Innisfail and hinterland. *Emu* 70: 105-116.
- GREENWAY, J. C. 1973. Type specimens of birds in the American Museum of Natural History. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 150: 1-345.
- HINDWOOD, K. A.; CUNNINGHAM, J. M. 1950. Notes on the birds of Lord Howe Island. *Emu* 50: 23-35.
- JUNGE, G. C. A. 1953. Zoological results of the Dutch New Guinea Expedition, 1939, No. 5. *The Birds*. Zool. Verhandel. 20.
- KIKKAWA, J. 1970. Birds recorded at Heron Island. *Sunbird* 1: 34-48.
- KINSKY, F. C.; YALDWYN, J. C. 1981. The bird fauna of Niue Island, South-west Pacific, with special notes on the White-tailed Tropic Bird and Golden Plover. *Nat. Mus. N.Z. misc. ser.* 2.
- MACGILLIVRAY, W. 1928. Bird-life of the Bunker and Capricorn Islands. *Emu* 27: 230-249.
- McKEAN, J. L.; EVANS, O.; LEWIS, J. H. 1976. Notes on the birds of Norfolk Island. *Notornis* 23: 299-301.
- MATHEWS, G. M. 1911. *The birds of Australia*, 1. London: Witherby.
- MATHEWS, G. M. 1912. A Reference-list to the birds of Australia. *Novit. zool.* 18: 171-446.
- MAYR, E. 1938. Birds collected during the Whitney South Sea Expedition. XL. *Am. Mus. Novit.* 1007.
- MAYR, E. 1949. Notes on the birds of Northern Melanesia. *Am. Mus. Novit.* 1417.
- MAYR, E.; GILLIARD, E. T. 1951. New species and subspecies of birds from the highlands of New Guinea. *Am. Mus. Novit.* 1524.
- MAYR, E.; GILLIARD, E. T. 1954. Birds of Central New Guinea. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 103: 315-374.
- MURPHY, R. C. 1924. Birds collected during the Whitney South Sea Expedition, II. *Am. Mus. Novit.* 124.
- NORTH, A. J. 1913. Nests and eggs of birds found breeding in Australia and Tasmania, 4 Pp. 204-206. Sydney: Govt. Printer.
- OLIVER, W. R. B. 1955. *New Zealand birds*. 2nd ed. Wellington: Reed.
- OLSON, S. L. 1973. A classification of the Rallidae. *Wilson Bull.* 85: 381-416.
- OLSON, S. L. 1975. A review of the extinct rails of the New Zealand region (Aves : Rallidae). *Nat. Mus. NZ Rec.* 1 (3): 61-77.
- PARKER, S. A. 1970. Critical notes on the status of some Northern Territory birds. *S. Aust. Orn.* 25: 115-125.
- PARKER, S. A.; ECKERT, H. J.; RAGLESS, G. B.; COX, J. B.; REID, N. H. C. 1980. An annotated checklist of the birds of South Australia. Adelaide: S. Aust. Orn. Ass.
- RAND, A. L. 1942. Results of the Archbold Expeditions. No. 43. Birds of the 1938-1939 New Guinea Expedition. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 79: 425-516.
- RIPLEY, S. D. 1977. *Rails of the world*. Boston: Godine.
- SALOMONSEN, F. 1976. The main problems concerning avian evolution on islands. *Proc. XVI Int. Orn. Congress.* Pp. 585-601. Canberra: Aust. Academy of Science.
- WODZICKI, K. 1971. The birds of Niue Island, South Pacific: an annotated checklist. *Notornis* 18: 291-304.

RICHARD SCHODDE, *Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, P.O. Box 84, Lyneham, A.C.T., 2602, Australia*; R. de NAUROIS, *2 Allées des Daims, 91800 Brunoy, France*.



## SHORT NOTE

### TERNs PERCHING ON WIRES

In a valuable chapter on Black-fronted Terns, *Clidonias albigularis* (sic), Edgar Stead mentioned that occasionally they use most unexpected perches. "One day in June, I saw a Black-fronted Tern sitting on the post of a wire-fence around a ploughed paddock, while nearby another was actually sitting on the wire, balancing itself by spreading its wings every now and then." On another occasion at Lyttelton Harbour, he saw eight sitting on posts and four on the top wire of a fence which ran some distance out into the water.

During the winter of 1952 in the Bay of Plenty, Bernard Sladden paid special attention to the visiting Black-fronted Terns between May and August. On 19 July, he was watching as "15 alighted on top of the battens of a fence"; but none actually on the wire. Latham (1981: 229-230) also noted this preference for fence battens as an inland roost in the Bay of Plenty.

For some months during the summer of 1954-55, a White-winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) frequented upper Manukau Harbour, a favourite haunt being the shallows of Harania Creek, which have now largely disappeared under industrial fill. Quite often it rested on the ground near or among flocks of waders; but twice it was seen "balancing precariously on the topmost strand of a derelict coil of wire out on the mud."

On 4 April 1976, as reported in *British Birds*, W. G. Harvey and his wife counted about 40 White-winged Black Terns in various stages of transitional plumage, perched on telegraph wires about 10 metres over an area of extensive rice fields in West Java. This item of tern behaviour elicited further reports, which were later published in *British Birds*. From France, Spain and Hong Kong came notes on Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*) perching on wires above fishponds or rice-paddies; but Sweden added an interesting twist to the tale. A typical *Sterna*, which could not certainly be identified as either Common (*S. hirundo*) or Arctic (*S. paradisaea*), "looked very out of place perched alone above quite ordinary, dry agricultural country" (K. Verrall in Jones *et al.* 1979).

On 27 November 1980 Beth Brown, David Baker and I visited the west side of the Firth of Thames and, as a matter of routine, paused to scan the Wherekawa gravel pits. Almost at once a flitting White-winged Black Tern caught the eye, a pale bird, probably in first year plumage. From time to time it would cease hawking insects and rise to settle on an electric power wire which passed near its favourite pool at a height of about 10 metres. Against a background of green slopes and darker patches of bush, both wire and bird could be hard to see. In the light breeze the tern balanced with some difficulty, using head, neck and tail in its efforts to control a tendency to see-saw. Again on 14 December, between bouts of insect-hunting among numerous Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo tahitica neoxena*) it would withdraw to its lofty, if precarious, perch. What is assumed to be the same individual has now been present along the Wherekawa-Miranda coast for more than a year. It ranges widely but returns not infrequently to the sheltered and fruitful gravel pits. In the spring of 1981 Beth Brown found that it had been joined by a second White-winged Black Tern. Two were still conspicuously present on 3 February 1982.

Although terns of various species commonly perch on posts, wire squatting is unusual. Perhaps incidentally I may ask whether anyone has ever seen a Caspian (*Hydroprogne caspia*) or a Little Tern (*S. albifrons*) perching anywhere but on the ground?

#### REFERENCES

- HARVEY, W. G. 1977. White-winged Black Terns perching on telegraph wires. *British Birds* 70: 545-546.  
 JONES, M.; ATKIN, K.; SAGE, B. L.; MILBLED, T.; MELVILLE, D. S.; VERRALL, K. 1979. Gulls and terns perching on wire. *British Birds* 72: 343-344.  
 LATHAM, P. C. M. 1981. Black-fronted Terns wintering in the Bay of Plenty. *Notornis* 28: 221-239.  
 SIBSON, R. B. 1955. Further notes on White-winged Black Tern in Manukau. *Notornis* 6: 160.  
 SLADDEN, B. 1953. Black-fronted Tern in Bay of Plenty. *Notornis* 5: 120.  
 STEAD, E. F. 1932. Life histories of New Zealand birds. Chap. 4, p. 28.

R. B. SIBSON, 26 *Entrican Avenue, Remuera, Auckland 5*