

LETTERS

The Editor,
Sir,

OYSTERCATCHER TERMINOLOGY

May I draw attention to two errors which have crept into Dr P. B. Heppleston's etymological note on the terminology of oystercatchers?

(a) *Haematopus*. The last syllable of this generic name is the Greek word for "foot." *Haematopus*, therefore, does not mean "bloody eye," but "blood-red foot (or leg)." The derivation is correctly given on page 179 of Helen Oliver's *Annotated Index* (1968). The ending signifying "eye" is "-ops" as in *Zosterops* = Belt eye or Girdle eye.

(b) *Malacophaga*. *Malakia* is a Greek diminutive meaning "little mollusca." Admittedly there is a Greek, not Latin, adjective *malakos*, meaning soft or luxurious. However, a malacologist is an authority, not on effeminate softness, but on living mollusca.

In the South Island the Black Oystercatcher is sometimes called the Musselpicker, a descriptive name which reflects sound observation by a good countryman. In north-west Nelson I have watched these oystercatchers picking among small mussels on exposed rocks and reefs at low tide. This vernacular name is added in the second edition of the *Field Guide*.

REFERENCES

- HEPPLESTON, P. B. 1973. Oystercatcher etymology. *Notornis* 20 (2). 120-122.
OLIVER, H. C. 1968. Annotated index to some early New Zealand bird literature. Pp. x + 1-222. Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs (Wildlife Publ. No. 106).

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31 July 1973

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The Editor,
Sir,

RECORDINGS OF N.Z. BIRDS AVAILABLE

I am writing to bring up to date the list of bird species that I now have available on tape for research purposes. This list shows all the additions to 13 October 1973 after the original list, giving those recordings held at 12 October 1972, published by me in *Notornis* a year ago (Macpherson 1972).

Adelie Penguin; Northern Blue Penguin; NZ Black-browed Mollymawk; Yellow-nosed Mollymawk; Antarctic Petrel; Antarctic Fulmar; Cape Pigeon; North Atlantic Shearwater; Manx Shearwater; Leach's Petrel; Little Shag; White Heron; Brown Teal; Blue Duck; NZ Scaup; Australian White Ibis; Takahe; Spur-winged Plover; Ringed Plover; Asiatic Whimbrel; Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit; Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit; Greenshank; Common Sandpiper; Terek Sandpiper; Turnstone; Japanese Snipe; Banded Dotterel; Black Stilt; Arctic Skua; Long-tailed Skua; Gull-billed Tern; Caspian Tern; Arctic Tern; Sulphur-crested Cockatoo; NI Kaka; SI Kaka; Eastern Rosella; Antipodes Is

Parakeet; Reischek's Parakeet; Long-tailed Cuckoo; SI Rifleman; Welcome Swallow; White-winged Triller; Dunnock; Whitehead; NI Fantail; Pied Tit; Yellow-breasted Tit; NI Robin; SI Robin; Silvereye; Cirl Bunting; Chaffinch; Canary; NI Saddleback.

REFERENCE

MACPHERSON, L. B. 1972. Recordings of New Zealand birds. *Notornis* 19 (4): 373-374.

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14 October 1973



The Editor,
Sir,

OYSTERCATCHER PROBLEMS

Reading Dr A. J. Baker's paper on the different oystercatchers in New Zealand has been an informative exercise; but I must confess that I am puzzled by the last sentence of the 'Abstract' — "This density effect may be alleviated for some time if the species expands its recent tendency to remain inland at breeding localities throughout the year, and adopt a terrestrial mode of feeding."

a. Is it possible to "expand a tendency"?

b. Surely oystercatchers adopted a terrestrial mode of feeding a very long time ago, possibly in the Lower Miocene, if *Paractiornis* was an ancestral oystercatcher. Whether *finschi* oystercatchers are probing Mother Earth deeply and vigorously on tidal flats or in grassy paddocks, or fossicking about on ploughed land, riverbeds or mountainsides, they are feeding terrestrially. Has anyone ever seen an oystercatcher feeding aerially like a Swift or Swallow; arboreally like a Kaka or Whitehead; aquatically like a Grebe or Scaup; pelagically like a Shearwater or Storm-Petrel? Dr Baker seems to be narrowing the meaning of the word "terrestrial" and restricting it to something like "entirely inland or non-littoral."

May I offer another correction? The first histogram, A on p. 141, is wrongly attributed. Manakau, with a central 'a,' is a harbourless settlement of no great distinction between Otaki and Levin in the province of Wellington. The large harbour to the west of Auckland, which is a very important wintering-ground for *finschi* oystercatchers, is Manukau, with a central 'u.' The spellings for which I am arguing are backed by tradition and vindicated by, for example, the N.Z. Index of 1930 and A. H. McLintock's "Descriptive Atlas of New Zealand," 1959.

REFERENCE

BAKER, A. J. 1973. Distribution and numbers of New Zealand oystercatchers. *Notornis* 20 (2): 128-144, figs 1-8.

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17 August 1973

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[The official publication on New Zealand place names (*Gazetteer of New Zealand Place Names*. 576 pp. Wellington: Department of Lands and Survey, 1968 [=1969]) lists the geographic locations of all places called either Manakau (p. 215) or Manukau (p. 231) — Ed.]