

## RECORDS OF RARE WADERS WITH REPORTS ON SIGHTINGS OF THREE SPECIES HITHERTO UNKNOWN IN NEW ZEALAND

### BLACK-TAILED GODWITS AT INVERCARGILL

On 15/12/63 my husband and I were out on the shell-banks of the Invercargill Estuary, opposite the Woodend Phosphate Works. Most of our field-work is perforce done with two young children, one on my husband's back and one at heel, and on this occasion my husband was near the shore-line with the children and I was alone on Horseshoe Spit (a shell-bank which those who attended the January '63 Field Week in Invercargill will remember as a happy hunting ground for Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*). As I neared a curve in the shell-bank, a flock of 25-30 Godwits went up from the steep far side of the bank, and with them a black-tailed godwit. I had good views of the bird in clear light, as the small flock made three wheeling turns over the shell-bank before shearing off to the south. Although it was some eight years since I had last seen a black-tailed godwit (on the Firth of Thames), I had no doubts about this bird; my uncertainty was whether it was an Asiatic (*Limosa l. melanuroides*) or a Hudsonian (*haemastica*). Field notes taken on the spot included the following: "White wing bar; white rump above tail; black tail tip; legs extending further than bar-tailed; almost white on underside." Upon returning home and checking the field differences between the two forms (Sibson, *Notornis* VIII, 58, and VIII, 161-162) we decided that this bird was almost certainly an Asiatic (*melanuroides*).

On 22/12/63 B. D. Heather, C. E. Barlow and Mr. Ben King, a visiting American, found a black-tailed godwit on the estuary, which they identified as a Hudsonian.

On 28/12/63 I was again on the Estuary, with B.D.H. and C.E.B. While B.D.H. made his way to a distant spit crowded with birds, C.E.B. and I watched another large group of Bartailed Godwits, Turnstones and South Island Pied Oystercatchers. On the fringe of this group, but slightly apart, was a bird, slimmer and darker than the other godwits. It obligingly raised a wing showing its dark underside. This it did on several occasions, and we knew that this was a Hudsonian. B.D.H., upon nearing his shell-bank, sent "his" birds over to us; they came, obligingly enough, in four or five groups — a mixture of godwits, a few Knots, Turnstones and South Island Pied Oystercatchers. As the last group came over, the entire flock, i.e. c. 1000 Godwits, some hundreds of S.I.P.O., about c. 200 Turnstones and 20 Knots, went up, and we lost sight of the Hudsonian almost immediately among so many oystercatchers. When B.D.H. waded his way to us again, we found that he, too, had had a Hudsonian, and it had come over to us with one of the later groups of "his" birds. As we were watching "our" Hudsonian for some time before his birds started to come over, we decided that there were two Hudsonians there that day.

Eight further visits to the Estuary between January and April produced no further sighting of either Asiatic or Hudsonian.

As far as I know, these are the most southerly recordings of the Hudsonian Godwit in New Zealand. — MAIDA L. BARLOW

[In January, 1963, B. D. Bell found an Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit on Enderby, one of the Auckland Islands. — Ed.]