

"Common Birds of Garden and Farmland," by Dr. P. C. Bull, 1968. Govt. Printer, Wellington, Serial G.P. 44, 25c.

In the past, Post-primary School Bulletins have presented information on various topics which in some instances such as seaweeds was not available elsewhere. The present booklet is fully up to the high standard and is a useful summary of why and how we study birds, how birds live and their relationship with man. Written in a down-to-earth manner by an eminent ecologist it is in discussing this relationship that Dr. Bull is at his best. For example he looks into the *reasons* for birds' habits ("Generally, the laying time of birds is such that the young leave the nest when their food supply is most abundant. Seeds are usually more abundant in summer than in spring, and this may explain why most of the seed-eating birds tend to lay later than the insect eaters.").

Ornithologists should read this well-illustrated booklet. They will be in a better position to answer the many queries which they are frequently asked, such as, "Why are you interested in birds?"

— J.M.C.

★

LETTER

The following information may be useful for solving several identification problems faced by R. B. Clapp in his article "Birds of Swain's Island," which appeared in Notornis Vol. XV, No. 3.

In the final paragraph on p. 199, Clapp mentions that two Hawaiian-Americans frequently referred in their diaries to a bird known as the 'gogo,' and he suggests that from their habits and other evidence, these are apparently either Brown Noddies (*Anous stolidus*) or Black Noddies (*Anous tenuirostris*). From personal experience, the word 'gogo' is used throughout the Tokelau Islands (100 miles further north) for the Brown Noddy — the Black Noddy being called 'lakia.' In Western Polynesia, the 'ng' sound is typically represented by 'g,' and the word 'gogo' is pronounced as a Maori would pronounce 'ngo ngo.' Thus the striking similarity to 'ngongo,' the name that the Ellice Islanders use for the Brown Noddy is not surprising. 'Gogo' or 'logo' will certainly be the Brown Noddy and I would be surprised if the locals did not have a separate name for the Black Noddy. It is interesting to note that in the Hawaiian dialect 'n' replaces the original Polynesian 'ng,' and yet the two Hawaiian observers on Swain's Island used 'g' in their diaries.

In the first paragraph on p. 201 the author is again confused as to whether the 'akaiakai' of the Hawaiian observers refers to the Fairy Tern (*Gygis alba*) or the Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*). The Tokelau name for the Fairy Tern is 'akiaki,' while the Sooty Tern is known as 'talagogo.' Since the observer also referred to the bird as a 'love bird,' it is fairly certain that the Fairy Tern is being referred to.

The final problem which arises is that the author is "unable to identify a bird referred to as a 'vasavosa'." The Tokelauans use the name 'vahavaha' for the American Wandering Tattler, which Clapp records as *Tringa incana*. The letters 's' and 'h' are not constant

throughout the Polynesian dialects and in Samoan the 'h' has been fully replaced by 's' or 'f.' The Tokelauans also aspirate the 'h' and thus 'vahavaha' would sound like 'vasavasa.' Almost certainly then, the unidentified bird would be the American Wandering Tattler, which I observed as a common migrant on Atafu atoll, Tokelau Islands.

— DAVID J. GRAVATT,
Zoology Dept., University of Auckland

The Editor,
Sir,

In the last two issues of this Journal there have been published two interesting and informative papers on the birdlife of some of the Pacific Islands, in which we in New Zealand should be taking a more vital interest. The keenness of the observers is to be commended; but one can only view with dismay the amount of collecting which has taken place, particularly of such rather rare species in the Pacific as the Bristle-thighed Curlew and the Sanderling, and of some of the pigeons, etc. One cannot but question the necessity for all this collecting, and the value of the information to be gathered from it, which would seem to be limited to the state of development of the gonads and of the moult. Surely such collecting smacks of the nineteenth century, and not of the conservation minded 1960's.

— A. BLACKBURN



LABOUR DAY WEEK-END, 1967 **At Glenavy, South Canterbury**

The South Island Labour Day Week-end, October 21 - 23, 1967, was based at the Glentaki Motor Camp at the Waitaki River Bridge. The site was well chosen for study of the local birds. The party settled into cabins and camps on the Friday evening. Ian and Joy McVinnie were the hosts and their programme was excellent. The days, regardless of weather, were spent in the field and interesting meetings held in the camp in the evenings.

A trip to the north side of the river mouth on the Saturday morning produced 1 White-faced Heron, 5 Little Shags, a resting flock of c. 1300 Spotted Shags, 2 Pied Stilts, Black-backed Gulls, 150 Black-billed and 3 Red-billed Gulls and 1 Caspian Tern. On a shingle bank at the outlet and on the other side was a colony of c. 5000 White-fronted Terns busy at nest building.

On the way to the south side in the afternoon a halt was made at the middle of the Waitaki Bridge to look down on a colony of c. 2000 Black-billed Gulls, with, as yet, only a few eggs. Six Red-billed Gulls were settled in the edge of the colony, one on a nest. On the other side of the bridge were 9 Black-fronted Terns. Nests of 2, 2, 1 and 1 were found.

At the south side of the mouth some of the party went to the tern colony, where no eggs were found. Many of the birds had a pink flush on their plumage. Others, led by Ian McVinnie, who had been studying the Banded Dotterel there and banding chicks, were shown late nests and chicks on the steep inner side of the high shingle bank, a new thing for most. Fewer nests were found