

## REVIEWS.

### **Group Adherence in the Common Tern, by Oliver L. Austin, *Bird-Banding*, xxii, 1: January, 1951.**

This is an extremely important paper which should be read by all members studying and ringing colonial nesting birds in New Zealand, such as terns and gulls. It stresses that there are two kinds of attachments among common terns: that of "site tenacity" (see also "Site Tenacity, a Behaviour Trait of the Common Tern," *Bird-Banding*, xx., 1; January, 1949) which brings birds back to where they were hatched year after year: and that of "group adherence" which tends to attach groups of birds together, even in wintering grounds. The Cape Cod tern colonies contain a number of rookeries which vary in size, but the whole group consistently contains approximately 25,000 terns. In the group there is some movement from rookery to rookery, but recoveries of tern ringed in other colonies are rare (c. 0.036%) and show that there is little interchange of populations. It is found that groups of terns ringed in one part of a rookery will be found in later years in the same part of the rookery. Site tenacity is not wholly responsible for this, as if environmental conditions force the birds to change their nesting site, the whole group will still nest together elsewhere, e.g., one group of 50 odd pairs nested together and were colour-ringed for three consecutive years. In the fourth, the site was destroyed, but the birds, easily recognised by their colour rings, did not scatter, but nested together again in a new site. Evidence is also given that young birds will remain together as a group through their first winter.—J.M.C.

### **On the Concept of "Incubation Period," by P. O. Swanberg.**

A review by S. C. Kendeigh in *Bird-Banding*, xxii., 1; January, 1951, discusses two possible definitions. It is concluded that incubation should be defined according to Heinroth's rule "the time which elapses with regular uninterrupted incubation of a newly laid egg, until the young has left the egg." In nature, it is generally possible to ascertain the incubation period with satisfactory exactitude from the time of laying of the last egg to the hatching of the last young.—J.M.C.

### **Distraction-Display in the Kentish Plover, by K. E. L. Simmons. *British Birds*, xlv., 6; June, 1951.**

Admirable descriptions, with lifelike drawings, which are useful for showing the resemblances and differences from the distraction display of the banded dotterel in New Zealand.—J.M.C.

### **Antarctic Isle, by Niall Rankin. 138 illustrations from photographs by the author. 383pp., Collins. 25/-. N.Z. price, 31/3.**

Colonel Rankin and three companions arrived in Leith Harbour, South Georgia, in November, 1946, to study Antarctic animal life. As he cruised in his own 42-ft. motor yacht, *The Albatross*, for many months in and out of the bays and inlets, he photographed and studied the birds and animals wherever they were most concentrated. Excellent photographs of the life-cycle of the wandering albatross have already proved their value to me in helping to identify the adult male, female and young in Wellington Harbour. The author still clings to the fallacy that the adult albatrosses leave their young at the end of the breeding season, and states:—"If a nestling continued to be fed by its parents it would be content to remain indefinitely at the nest, happy and carefree, with no inducement to go out into the wide world. Drastic and cruel as it may seem, it is only by cutting off supplies and completely abandoning the young bird that it is compelled to fend for itself."

Dr. Falla, Richdale, Sorensen and others have recorded adult Tubinares returning to the nest after the young birds have flown, and I really think that if the author had patiently watched and waited a few days longer he would have seen the return of at least one of the adult birds.

Magnificent photographs of the penguins, sheath-bill, mollymawks, and sooty albatrosses and the photos of the nesting burrows of the whale-birds, Cape hen, Cape pigeon, South Georgian diving petrel, and the tiny Wilson's storm petrel form a collection of bird pictures that positively delights any keen ornithologist.

The chapters on the birds alone make the book one well worth reading, but there are in addition, chapters on the history of the island, the whaling industry, seals and ecology that make the picture of the island complete. Everyone interested in seabirds should have a copy of this book, which is a companion volume to this author's book on the land birds, "Haunts of British Divers," a poem of nature photographs.—R. V. Roberts.

**Bird Recognition 2, Birds of Prey and Water-fowl**, by James Fisher, with 85 illustrations by Fish-hawk and 32 maps compiled by W. B. Alexander. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

This eagerly-awaited little volume, like its predecessor, contains a mass of easily-accessible information about British birds. It is on the same lines as the first volume (reviewed in this publication) which deals with the sea birds and waders and has proved of considerable value to New Zealand bird observers as it contains many species found here. Volume two has nine species which occur or have been recorded in New Zealand, besides several others very closely related to species found here, and the information given about these birds, besides the details of recognition, habits, etc., of other species, make this book one that New Zealanders cannot afford to miss. How bird observers in this country would welcome a book on similar lines dealing with all the birds found here. Some day, perhaps, the publishers of this series may consider the production of such a book. At its modest price (3s. 6d. in Britain) volume two is within the reach of everyone interested in bird-life. Two further volumes are in preparation.—R.H.D.S.

**Nestboxes**, by Edwin Cohen and Bruce Campbell, British Trust for Ornithology, Field Guide Number Three, 1952. Price, 2s. 6d. (Address: 2 King Edward Street, Oxford, England.)

The enterprise of the British Trust for Ornithology in issuing field guides is a highly commendable one and this booklet, the third of the series, aims to describe the best and simplest form of nestboxes for attracting hole or ledge nesting birds. In New Zealand, the only widely distributed, common birds likely to adopt nestboxes are the introduced house sparrow and starling and it must be admitted that little attempt has been made in this country to invite birds to occupy these artificial sites for nests. For those wishing to conduct bird-watching of certain species in the garden or elsewhere on a scientific basis, the utilisation of nestboxes has manifest advantages. There are few native birds that could be attracted to these boxes, though in some of the more favoured localities it should be possible to cater for the needs of the rifleman (in Dunedin suburbs and Taranaki, for instance), the tomtit, morepork, kingfisher and possibly ducks. It seems that something could be done in New Zealand on these lines and if it is possible to provide breeding facilities for the species mentioned it would be worth while, though precautions against predators would be necessary and against house sparrows and starlings usurping the nest-boxes. Those who may contemplate activities of this kind will find this booklet, which is well illustrated with diagrams, invaluable for the purpose in view.—R.H.D.S.

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(\* denotes life member.)

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