

altogether ruled out but was considered unlikely for various reasons which need not be enumerated, consequent on the bird's reappearance.

On June 7 this year the bird was again located, this time on the bed of the Tuki Tuki River, in company with a white heron, and has been seen since by myself, on June 15 in the same place, and on July 26 on Ahuriri Lagoon. Several other people have also reported seeing it in June and July. The following description has been compiled from field notes made on the various occasions when favourable views have been obtained:—

A "miniature" of the white heron, identical in proportions but appearing only about half the size. Bare skin of face, and base of bill is yellow; distal three-quarters of bill, black. Legs black or blackish-slate, according to light, and projecting conspicuously beyond the tail in flight. Flight of typical heron type but wing-beats rather more rapid than usual.

The long legs eliminate the white reef heron as a possibility; in that species the legs are shorter and do not project noticeably beyond the tail in flight. So far as the plumed egret is concerned, Glenister (1951, p. 102) and Hachisuka (1932, vol. i., p. 355) both state that the bill is black in the breeding season. Dr. Falla (in litt.) says that in *alba* the black bill could not possibly survive the breeding season, and as *intermedia* has rarely if ever been observed in Australia with the bill any colour but yellow, it seems likely that the black bill is equally transitory in that species. In *garzetta* the bill is permanently black; the individual observed at Napier from June to September, and December, 1951, and again in June-July, 1952, has had the bill black whenever seen. Another field character reported for *intermedia* is that the tibia is paler than the tarsus, though various authorities differ slightly as to the exact colours. This feature has been looked for since the bird reappeared this year, but, so far as I can ascertain the legs are uniformly dark. No ornamental plumes have been noted at any time since the bird was first seen.

In view of the fact that in two successive winters the bird has retained the bill colours of *garzetta*, and that I have been able to detect no difference in the colour between tibia and tarsus, there seems little doubt that its identification as the little egret is justifiable.

Mr. E. L. Kehoe, of Greymouth, informs me (in litt.) that a bird of similar appearance has been seen in Westland this year. The bird was observed in July at Lake Ryan, near Greymouth, and about a week later the same bird (or another of similar size) was noted with a white heron near Westport. In the latter case, however, the colour of legs and bill could not be determined.

It seems likely that the recent marked increase in white herons seen throughout New Zealand may be explained by an invasion from Australia, and the occurrence of one, and possibly two, little egrets appears to support this view.

REFERENCES.

- Glenister, A. G., 1951—The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Penang. Oxford University Press.
Hachisuka, the Hon. Masauji, 1932—The Birds of the Philippine Islands; vol. i., pt. ii. London.

THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES.

Many of the society's investigations and inquiries are designed to enable as many members as possible to help, and to make their knowledge known. Members are invited to participate in all the following projects:—

PERMANENT INVESTIGATIONS.

RINGING.—A considerable number of black-billed and red-billed gulls, white-fronted tern, banded dotterel and pied stilts have been ringed in

several parts of New Zealand with the "zonal colour" rings, i.e., a different colour is used in each district. N.Z. dotterel and some blackbirds and thrushes have also been colour ringed, in these cases each bird being distinguished according to pre-arranged plans, with a different combination of colours. Members are requested to immediately report any ringed birds seen. Care should be taken to state the colour of the rings, and which leg or legs they are on, and also if both legs were examined to make sure all rings were seen clearly. The date and locality should be given.

Members are advised that the Dominion Museum has taken over the rings and records, and the society is indebted to the museum for this service. Mr. J. M. Cunningham has relinquished the convenership of the Ringing Committee, and Mr P. C. Bull has taken his place. All correspondence on ringing matters should, therefore, be addressed to Mr. Bull, 131 Waterloo Road, Lower Hutt.

NEST RECORDS.—This is an investigation in which almost all members can help. Cards should be filled in for all species—when nests with eggs or young are found, even if the nest is visited only once, or if it is deserted or destroyed. The commonest birds are worthy of attention as there are many gaps in our knowledge of these birds. Cards are available on request from Mr. J. King, Box 448, Masterton.

BEACH PATROL.—Mr. R. K. Dell, c/o Dominion Museum, Wellington, is now organising this investigation, and cards should be obtained from and returned to him. In the case of all petrels found, black-billed and red-billed gulls, and other species showing some similarity, the diagnostic feature should be mentioned in the square "identification confirmed by" or else the name of an authority who has examined the specimens and confirmed their identification.

INQUIRIES.

The following are still current. Members who have not yet supplied information they may have, are invited to give it to the respective organisers immediately.

DABCHICK SURVEY.—Organiser: Mr. R. B. Sibson. Information is still being gathered on the numbers and distribution of this bird in all parts of the country. The full questionnaire was published in the cyclo-styled Bulletin No. 1, 1941-2.

BANDED DOTTEREL.—Organisers: Messrs. C. A. Fleming and R. H. D. Stidolph. The second interim report was published in *Notornis*, V. 4, No. 4.

GODWIT.—Organiser: Mr. R. H. D. Stidolph. The first interim report was published in *Notornis* V. 4, No. 6.

MYNA.—Organiser: Mr. J. M. Cunningham. Information supplementary to that published in *N.Z.B.N.*, V. 3, No. 2 and *Notornis* V. 4, No. 4, is being collected for publication in a further report. Records of all birds seen in the Bay of Plenty area, Auckland northern suburbs and North Auckland, are desired, as well as any changes noted in the other parts of the North Island.

WEKA IN GISBORNE-EAST COAST.—Organiser: Mr. J. C. Davenport. The information required is of numbers and movements, and is detailed in *Notornis* V. 4, No. 2.

CORRECTION.—Portion of the caption on page 10 of the July, 1952, number should read: Part of the stigma shown detached at bottom of plate. Lateral petal is shown in dotted line in the main figure.

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