

# N.Z. BIRD NOTES

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of New Zealand.

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"The Nesting Activities of a Pair of Blackbirds," by I. Tily.

## EDITORIAL.

After some delay, the next issue completes Volume I of the magazine. The editorial work through a number of difficult years has fallen mainly on the Editor, who has also carried the secretarial burden. With the cessation of hostilities it is hoped that a new era of activity may commence. It may even be possible to hold a representative Annual Meeting. The steady increase in membership has been encouraging and it should now be possible to relieve the original officers of the main duties. An enlargement of the magazine, inclusion of illustrations, and more regular issue is planned, and further suggestions from members would be welcomed.

Inclusion of a named list of the birds of New Zealand, compiled by Professor Marples, and issued as a supplement with this number, should prove useful to members.

R. A. F.

## REVIEWS.

Jean Delacour and Ernst Mayr: "The Family Anatidae." *The Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. LVII, No. 1, March, 1945, pp. 3-55.

This important review by an experienced aviculturist and a leading systematist sets a new and high standard in taxonomy. The swans, geese and ducks of the world are reviewed and the old classification, with its many small genera, is replaced by more natural grouping. The most revolutionary change is the grouping of some 36 species of river ducks into the genus *Anas*. Thus, the various teal, widgeon, pintail and mallard are recorded as sub-divisions of one comprehensive genus. As far as New Zealand ducks are concerned the effect is to simplify the list, and this simplification is reflected in the new list provided by Professor Marples as a supplement to this issue of *New Zealand Bird Notes*. Much attention is given by the authors to factors

in classification such as downy plumage, courtship and display; nesting habits and voice. Thus the work of field naturalists and aviculturists has been called on as an aid to classification, supplementing the older bias in favour of structure and plumage.

The work is undoubtedly one of the most important reviews in recent ornithological literature.

R. A. F.

"*Emu*," Vol. XLV, pt. 2, October, 1945.

This number contains an article by R. T. Littlejohns—"Some Random Observations Regarding Incubation"—describing variation in the habits of birds, mainly dottrels, under different weather conditions.

A paper of similar general interest by Angus Robinson discusses the theories of territory as they apply to some Australian birds, including magpies and ducks.

The second and concluding part of Dr. W. R. B. Oliver's long paper on "Avian Evolution in New Zealand and Australia," appears and calls for a fuller review than can be attempted here.

Still another general paper, "The Nature of Bird Activities," by G. R. Gannon, helps to make this number unusually full of theoretical discussions, which are, however, of great interest.

Additional papers are: "The Wood-Sandpiper in Western Australia," by D. L. Serventy; "The Banded Stilt," by Jack Jones, and the usual "Stray Feathers," including photographs of golden plover and bar-rumped godwit.

R. A. F.

*Michael Sharland*: "Tasmanian Birds—A Field Guide to the Birds Inhabiting Tasmania and Adjacent Islands, including the Sea Birds." Oldham, Beddome and Meredith, Ltd., Hobart, 1945, I-VI and 120 pages.

The Tasmanian avifauna differs largely from that of New Zealand, but the members of the O.S.N.Z. will be surprised to find how many New Zealand birds are to be found in Tasmania.

As stressed in the introduction, this little book contains all the information necessary to identify Tasmanian birds in the field. After the scientific and vernacular names follows the description of the most important features with a concise description of the habitat, nesting and general field notes of each species. Excellent photographs of several more important and characteristic species will be of great assistance to any bird student.

Let us hope that this excellent little book will not only find its way to the bookshelves of New Zealand ornithologists but also will serve as an incentive for the publication of a similar field guide to New Zealand birds.

K. A. W.

R. A. Falla and G. Stokell, "Investigation of the Stomach Contents of N.Z. Fresh Water Shags." *Trans. R.S. of N.Z.*, Vol. LXXIV, Part 4, pp. 320-331.