

the garden. (This happens about this date every year). Thrushes, blackbirds and tuis were the most notable chasers. From this date occasional songs of thrushes were heard daily morning and evening. (I.T.)

**BLACKBIRD** (*T. merula*).—Dunedin, Aug., 45, song heard daily at noon and eve, first daytime song, 14/8/45; building with mud, 16/1/45; last song, 11/1/46, but at Purakanui, Otago, 12/1/46; Dunedin, sub-songs, 19/2/46, and 1 and 3/3/46; much excited chasing 12/3/46, also later; males back on song perches, 5/4/46; Dunedin, 8/4/46, a tui which fed from the escallonia flowers near the site of last season's blackbird's nest was attacked repeatedly by a male blackbird. (I.T.) Two or three seen and heard in subalpine scrub near junction of Dart and Whitburn rivers, 26/2/46. (W.A.W.)

**WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE** (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).—Appear to be increasing throughout district, Wanganui to King Country. (W.P.M.) Very common on road to Te Awaite, East Coast, Wairarapa; more numerous beyond Martinborough, and along the coastline, where 56 were seen in one paddock c 5 acres, 22/12/45. A total of 80 was recorded on a 30-mile road. (J.M.C. and R.A.D.) Occasionally seen Dunedin suburbs and near Middlesmarch. (I.T.)

---

**DISTRIBUTION OF MYNA**.—In New Zealand the myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) is a species of rather restricted distribution and accurate information is required of the precise localities where it is found. It is proposed to publish a distribution map shortly, and all members are requested to help by informing J. M. Cunningham, 39 Renall Street, Masterton, of the localities where this bird is found. Mention should be made as to whether the occurrences are regular or occasional and all records of birds on the limits of distribution in an area should be given. It is even more important to state areas where this bird is NOT found. Members are requested to send in the information before the end of January.

---

## REVIEWS.

**The Blackbird**, by A. F. C. Hillstead. (Faber & Faber, 1945.)

The author's approach to many of the problems of bird behaviour lacks the very essential of a clear, unbiased, scientific attitude, and even calls in the aid of occult powers to explain certain of his woolly-minded theses. One is left with the impression that the main object of this book is not to contribute anything of importance to the study of this most interesting bird, but, rather to tilt at the tendency of some workers to over-emphasise the instinctive nature of bird behaviour without sufficient recognition of the variability in behaviour of individuals. This tendency and the anti-anthropomorphist are his pet aversions and most of the space in his book is occupied busily engaged knocking down these two "straw men." Altogether, in this most unsatisfying work on the blackbird it is surprising that the author finds so much to say about so few facts, although he claims a lifetime study of this bird.—L.G.

**"Birds of the South West Pacific,"** by Ernst Mayr.

It is not often that there is published a book of direct concern to New Zealand ornithologists. Although New Zealand lies to the south of the area covered by this concise and authoritative handbook, it is inevitable that it should contain frequent mention of the birds of this

country, and it is a most valuable addition to the library of the ornithologist who is interested in the origins, affinities, range and migrations of many New Zealand birds.

Of special interest are the sections on petrels, terns and waders. *Puffinus griseus* is noted as straying only rarely into the Central Pacific; *Puffinus bulleri* is not mentioned, but may have been overlooked, as there is a white-bellied form of *P. pacificus* which much resembles it. Neither Caspian nor White-fronted Terns have been recorded—in the South West Pacific; but there is the suggestion that the Arctic Tern may pass through that area on migration, as “it has been found repeatedly in New Zealand waters”—a statement that needs investigation.

To turn for a moment to taxonomy; the Red-necked Stint is rightly made a subspecies of *minuta*, and it is noteworthy that the Hudsonian Godwit becomes a subspecies of *Limosa limosa*. The Long-tailed Cuckoo loses its generic isolation and is put in the genus *Eudynamis*.

The rarity of the Sanderling in New Zealand is explained by the statement that “normally it reaches only the northern fringe” of the South West Pacific. The Stilt is recorded only from New Britain, where it seems to be an irregular visitor from Australia.

Our Gannet is not mentioned, and there is no evidence that immature Gannets go north and cross the Equator as they might be expected to do, on the analogy of British gannets which in their first years move south to the equatorial waters of the Atlantic. The only representative of the shags to get into the South West Pacific is the Little Pied (*Ph. melanoleucos*).

Nine races of Banded Rail occur in the South West Pacific; Sooty Rail (*tabuensis plumbea*) and Pukeko have a wide distribution. A special plea is made for the study of the Reef Heron, of which grey, mottled and white specimens occur in the tropical islands. In New Zealand, although there is no real problem of plumage variation, observers should be on the look-out for aberrations; e.g., the white-phase example at Wairau Bar.

In the introduction it is modestly stated that the study of the birds of the South West Pacific has only just begun. The contents of this volume somewhat belie this. The future field-worker may be thankful that he has really to hand an excellent guide book in which the problems are clearly set before him.—R.B.S.

“Emu,” Vol. xlv., pt. 3, January, 1946.

Particular interest centres on a paper on the White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*) by K. A. Hindwood, of Sydney, who discusses the distribution of this species on the east coast of Australia and Tasmania. On the information available, it is suspected that the tern, which occurs in Australian waters principally between May and November, is a migrant from New Zealand, though it appears that a small proportion only of the birds breeding in New Zealand crosses the Tasman. Most of the birds in Australia are in immature plumage. Extensive banding of young birds in New Zealand is necessary to determine definitely the migratory movement, a field which members of the Ornithological Society could well take up. The article is illustrated by excellent photographs.

The flocking of the silver eye (*Zosterops lateralis*) with particular reference to 1944, in the winter of which year this bird was exceptionally scarce in many districts, is dealt with by J. M. Cunningham, Master-ton. The winter of 1944 was a mild one and the possible effect of these conditions on flocking is considered. As the writer states, further information is required of dates of flocking and their possible correlation with weather and hours of daylight, and also more estimates of comparative population.

The occurrence of Geoffroy's sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaulti*) in New Zealand is recorded by R. B. Sibson and P. C. Bull. The record is a sight one, on August 20, 1943, on Manukau Harbour. It is the first record of this bird in New Zealand. The bird was seen again on September 5.—R.H.D.S.