

## WHITE-FACED HERON IN GOLDEN BAY DISTRICT, NELSON.

By CHARLES LINDSAY, Dominion Museum, Wellington.

In December, 1945, Mrs. E. M. Hayter, of Motupipi, reported two greyish herons that frequented some trees near her home. These birds were observed for some weeks but did not nest, although they gave indications of so doing, Mrs. Hayter on one occasion observing one bird flying with a stick in its beak. At this same period Mr. R. Alexander observed this heron at the tidal mouths of the Takaka and Wainui rivers. During October, 1946, he reported five birds on the Takaka River, near its mouth.

In December, 1946, Mr. W. Hadfield, of Wainui, reports that the light-grey heron was observed in the evening flying in groups to the willows that line the Wainui River near its mouth. He considers that they nest in the willows, but no actual nests have been found.

On December 27, 1946, Dr. W. R. B. Oliver and the writer observed a solitary white-faced heron (*Notophyx novaehollandiae*) on the Aorere River about half a mile from Collingwood township. During February, 1947, more than twenty birds were seen together at Rangihæta, near Takaka. Mr. R. Alexander, during February, also reports it from Awaroa Inlet.

These records and reports recorded by Dr. R. A. Falla that this species is plentifully distributed in Westland, indicate that this bird, formerly of rare local occurrence, is in the process of becoming well-established. No definite records of its nesting have been recorded; but Mr. Hadfield's inference that it nests in the willows at the mouth of the Wainui, and Mrs. Hayter's observation of the bird flying with the stick in its beak, are quite in accord with its breeding habits in Australia, where it builds a nest of sticks in a tree overhanging water.

Both Mrs. Hayter and Mr. Alexander have been resident in the Takaka district for some years, but it is only during the last three years that the white-faced heron has been observed.

[When I visited the Takaka district in October, 1946, a resident at the mouth of the Takaka River described to me a heron which fitted the description of the white-faced species. He said he had seen several birds in that locality but on October 9, the date on which I visited the Takaka River mouth, none was seen or had been seen for several days.—R. H. D. Stidolph.]

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## REVIEWS.

**Modern Bird Study.**—Ludlow Griscom (Harvard Univ. Press, 1945, 18/9.)

This is a very good book. It deliberately omits discussion of several aspects of ornithology, but a list of the chapters will give an idea of the range covered. Development of Field Ornithology, Capacity and Intelligence of Birds, Adaptability of Birds; Migration, Causes and Origin; Migration, Factors and Routes; four chapters on Distribution; general, South America, Central America, North America; and, finally, Classification and the Species Concept. New Zealand comes in for a surprising degree of mention.

The chapters on Capacity and Adaptability, Migration, and Classification are particularly good. The former are of considerable interest to the psychologist as well as the ornithologist. There is some useful "debunking," particularly of Merriam's concept of transcontinental life-zones, though the much sounder vertical life-zones in tropical and mountainous countries are retained. His definition of a species is one of the

best I have seen. "It consists of actually or potentially interbreeding populations, no matter how different they may seem to be, reproductively isolated from other such groups, no matter how similar they may appear to be."

One criticism: On pp. 50-51, Griscorn discusses the extinction or partial disappearance of native New Zealand birds, and appears to regard the introduction of European birds as the main cause. Rats, cats, stoats, and the axe, are not mentioned, though he recognises the importance of some of these factors for North America.

Plain bird-watcher, or ornithologist, will find much of interest and profit in this book.—R. J. Scarlett.

**An Undescribed Form of the Black Petrel, by R. A. Falla. Rec. Cant. Mus., Vol. v., No. 2, pp. 111-113, plates xvii-xviii, Nov. 15, 1946.**

This paper relates the events leading to the discovery of a new subspecies of the Black Petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni westlandica*) found breeding in the coastal bush-clad hills near Barrytown, Westland, in 1945, and gives a description of the new form, which has fresh eggs late in May, downy young in August and fully-fledged young in November. This winter breeding season contrasts strikingly with the summer breeding season of the typical bird. Incidentally this interesting event was first brought under the notice of the author by the pupils of Barrytown School through their head teacher, Mr. W. Watson, the school being a group member of this society.—R.H.D.S.

**OYSTERCATCHERS AT SEA.**—Mr. Max Nicol informs me that on several occasions when fishing from a launch three or four miles off the east coast of the North Island (c 30 miles south of Castlepoint) he has seen one or two black oystercatchers (*Haematopus* spp.) settle on the sea. On one occasion, in November, 1946, a bird, settling close behind the anchored launch, swam up to it, was caught and liberated again. When handled it uttered a high-pitched piping. Although European oystercatchers are known to settle in flocks on the ocean, often at a considerable distance from land, this habit does not appear to have been previously reported in N.Z. waters.—J. M. Cunningham, Masterton.

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The following members have been enrolled since the publication of the membership list in the last Bulletin. An asterisk denotes a life member:—

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