

slight depression amid stones. On the same day, we also noted a Dotterel chick. On the 13th October, we discovered another young Dotterel hiding from us amongst the stones. The accompanying photograph, taken exactly as we found the bird, clearly shows its protective coloration and instinctive habits.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).—Contrary to the experience of Sir Walter Buller, on the 7th October, 1923, in company with Mr. Wilkinson, I saw four Stilts wading in deep water, their long legs being practically entirely submerged, and the water touching their breasts. Of the four birds, one lacked the white collar on the hind neck, but had just a tinge of white in its place.

Southern Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*).—These birds arrived at Waingawa somewhat earlier than is usual in 1923 (the following autumn and winter season was a boisterous one). Although really a non-breeding autumn and winter visitor, odd birds, mostly immature, may be seen in spring and summer months.

Paradise Duck (*Casarca variegata*).—Rare. Although continually about in the district, I did not note this species of duck in the Wairarapa before the 14th October, 1923, when with Mr. Wilkinson I saw a male bird on the Ruamahunga river-bed. On the 20th November, we were fortunate to come across in the same locality a female with four ducklings. To my knowledge this bird is rare in this district, but is fairly plentiful in some neighbouring localities. It may be a regular breeder. Other reliable observers reported several of these birds in the same locality as those noted above.

I have been informed that the Blue-winged Shoveller (*Spatula rhynchotis*) has been seen in the district. It is very likely it does occur, but must be rare. I have not noted it, except around Wairarapa Lake, where it is fairly plentiful.

Rangitumau Hill, a few miles north of Masterton, was in the early days a favourite haunt, besides other species, of the Blue-wattled Crow (*Callaeas wilsoni*), Piopio (*Turnagra tanagra*), and Huia (*Neomorphia acutirostris*). In the swamps around Masterton the Fern-Bird (*Bowdleria punctata*) was abundant, and throughout the district roamed the Weka (*Gallirallus australis*)—now these birds are but a memory to the "older hands," gone, I am afraid, never to return.

Some Rare Birds in Tasmania

By H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., West Devonport, Tasmania.

In Mr. Edwin Ashby's interesting paper on "Extinct or Rare Australian Birds," read at the Conference in Hobart last year, he mentions (*Emu*, XXIII, p. 182), the Orange-breasted Grass Parrot (*Neophema chrysogastra*), as having practically disappeared from the visited portions of South Australia between 1885 and 1918, in which year Dr. Morgan saw a number in the South-east, after which they again disappeared.

In *Emu*, IX., p. 141, Mr. F. M. Littler, of Launceston, records a trip which he made to North Island, off the north-eastern coast of Tasmania, and within sight of land. He describes the island as about 300 acres in extent, consisting principally of rocks and tussock-grass, with patches of sown grass. After

describing various species seen during his visit, including Dusky Fantails (*Rhipidura diemenensis*) and Flame-breasted Robins (*Petroica phænicea*), he says: "A flock of six Orange-bellied Grass Parrakeets (*Neophema chrysogastra*) paid a short visit; they were seen to arrive from the seaward side, and after a short rest departed for Tasmania." This was in 1910, exact date not given, but about the end of September.

My own notes record a small party of twelve individuals of this Grass Parrot in a weedy garden beside Chinaman's Creek, which adjoins Devonport town on the south; they were feeding eagerly on the seeds in the grass and weed tangle, and had probably only recently arrived. This was in the afternoon of 5th August, 1918, the very year in which Dr. Morgan recorded their reappearance in South Australia; my note says that the wind was south-east, light, and sky cloudy, at the time. These were the first of the species I had seen in Devonport, although the previous summer, when driving with a friend through the Hasford district, a few miles to the eastward, between the Mersey and Port Sorell, and not far from the latter, I noticed several feeding in a paddock of short grass, and got out of the vehicle to identify them.

Ground-Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*).—When I first settled in the bush near Table Cape, North-west Tasmania, more than thirty years ago, I frequently flushed these birds when riding across a plain which lay between my small homestead and the nearest township. This plain was dry and sandy in summer, very swampy in winter, and covered with large clumps of button grass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*), the round seed-heads of which are elevated on long stems; the Parrots would rise from one of these clumps as the horse approached, fly perhaps 30 or 40 yards, and plump down into another clump. They usually flushed singly; I never saw them in parties like the Grass Parrot just described, and as it was always towards the end of summer (February and March) when I saw them, they probably lived on the seeds of the button grass. The Parrot family seems partial to seeds of this kind; another great clump which grew plentifully in the district and bore its seed on a tall spike, is locally known as cutting-grass, and botanically as *Gahnia psittacorum* or Parrot Gahnia.

The plain to which the Ground-Parrots resorted is near the township, and is now largely built upon; quite possibly they may still be found on similar plains which have not been interfered with. I used to regard them as migrants, as they seemed to clear right away before winter. The flight certainly appears feeble, but we cannot judge a bird's migratory powers by its performance on land. The Bronze Cuckoos seem to have very small flying power, yet the Shining Bronze (*Lamprolaima lucida*) makes the journey regularly from tropical Australia to New Zealand. Sir Walter Buller says he kept a register at Wellington for ten years of its periodical

arrival, and noted its regular occurrence between the 5th and 10th October. Our little Pipit too (*Anthus australis*), which seems so very averse from a flight of any length when here, clears off each autumn on some mysterious journey, perhaps to Central or North-west Australia.

The Black *Malurus*.—When walking along the bank of the Mersey to Latrobe on the 28th January just past, I noted a male *Malurus longicaudus* of the black variety mentioned by Miss J. A. Fletcher in her paper read at the 1923 Conference. The wings appeared black instead of grey, and the parts of the plumage which usually look blue-black in a good light, seemed in this case jet black. The bird had a beakful of small white grubs, so was still feeding young, although so late in the season; he flew across a paddock of long grass to a belt of scrub on the further side, and as I was on the way to attend a public function I did not follow. An occasional male of this melanistic variety has been noted during my residence here, and in widely-separated parts of the district, so that there are evidently several about. It is possible that, if a male of the ordinary colouring should survive a certain number of years, his plumage would assume these darker tints as a final phase.

Birds of a New South Wales Garden

By H. V. EDWARDS, R.A.O.U., "Old Rectory," Bega, N.S.W.

If they are treated as welcome visitors, or at any rate not seriously interfered with or scared away, the number of different birds which constantly appear in gardens and other enclosed spaces around houses in the country is often astonishing. In my case the areas enclosed amount to about two acres—about two-thirds being pasture land studded with native and ornamental trees—pines, laurels, elms, and oaks chiefly, and the remainder, flower and vegetable garden. The holding is situated on the far South Coast of New South Wales—quite in the open and close to a large town. The climate on the whole is temperate, although at times the extremes of heat and cold are considerable. Silver-eyes are frequent visitors, arriving in numbers about January, when fruit is ripening, but a few of these birds are usually to be seen during the winter. These birds do good work in ridding fruit trees of scale insects and other harmful kinds. Silver-eyes, however, take their toll of soft, ripe fruits, but this is partly to slake their thirst, and no one should grudge a useful insectivorous bird its due reward. Mulberries, grapes, peaches and apricots when dead ripe are especial favourites of the little yellowish-green birds. The delicate cup-nest, with its two pretty pale-blue eggs, is often swung from the twig of a fruit tree, and usually is not discovered until the leaves fall. It is as a rule well hidden, slender in build, and made of inconspicuous material.