

croaking sounds in quick succession (half a second each). During its stay at Wairau Bar it was frequently attacked by Red-billed Gulls and once by a pair of Pied Oyster-catchers. These attacks did not cause the bird to give up its place, but often it made a dart at them with the bill, which is always pointed skywards when the bird is attacked.

According to Oliver (1930, p. 363) the "New Zealand specimens are almost always of the grey type." In the only white bird so far collected in New Zealand "wholly and partly slate-coloured feathers are scattered over the whole surface."

Mayr and Amadon (1941), in their paper on the geographical variation of *Demigretta sacra* in its breeding range, describe three colour phases—grey, white, and mottled, the last with a somewhat restricted distribution. It is interesting to note that in the white phase juvenile birds are usually mottled up to 50 per cent., and also that white birds in their first adult plumage frequently retain a few grey feathers though adults are all white or very rarely have a grey feather or two. It therefore seems likely that the Wairau Bar bird is an adult bird of the white phase.

The question arises now as to whether the Wairau Bar visitor is an accidental mutant of the grey form of New Zealand or has it to be considered as a straggler from one of the Pacific Islands. The unsociable behaviour of the bird and the fact that although almost certainly over a year old, it was not observed at Wairau Bar and surrounding districts prior to April 15, 1944, suggests the latter.

Information supplied by Dr. M. A. F. Barnett of the Meteorological Branch, Air Department, Wellington, which cannot be published in detail, shows that a tropical cyclonic disturbance originating in the general area of the Fiji Islands passed east of the North Island of New Zealand in the latter half of March, 1944.

REFERENCES

- Mayr, E., and Amadon, D. 'Geographical Variation in *Demigretta sacra* (Gmelin).' *Amer. Mus. Nov.*, no. 1144, October 13, 1941.
Oliver, W. R. B. *New Zealand Birds*, Wellington, 1930.

Black Swamp-Pheasant.—I have found melanism rare amongst Australian birds, and I was most surprised when last month a black Swamp-Pheasant (*Centropus phasianinus*) was discovered at the Myall Lakes, N.S.W. These birds frequent a former lake bed lying between Bombah Point and the ocean, and I know of no place in our coastal district where they are so numerous.—W. J. ENWRIGHT, West Maitland, N.S.W., 6/11/44.