

Mystic Park, Mr. P. A. Bourke, R.A.O.U., of Rand, N.S.W., has kindly provided me with some of the notes he made when, with Messrs. Victor and Tom Lowe, local observers, he visited the area on January 13, 1957.

The Cattle Egrets were with a large mixed flock of birds feeding about the edge of drying floodwaters from the Avoca River and were watched from a car at a bridge over the river about a mile east of Mystic Park township. There were at least twenty of them intermixed with spoonbills, herons, ibis and other water birds.

Mr. Bourke adds that a little later he received advice from Mr. Victor Lowe saying he had seen (Jan. 19) six Cattle Egrets in the locality feeding with *Egretta alba* and that the next day he observed a larger number, but owing to the birds being some distance away, he was not able to make a complete count.

## White Ibis in Tasmania

By MICHAEL SHARLAND, Hobart, Tas.

The White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) had not been recorded in Tasmania until the arrival of a number of the birds, late in May 1957. Then there was a sudden and unexpected influx to the northern part of the State, with a few stragglers continuing farther south to the Midlands. The event, following so closely on the first record of a Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*) at Kingston Beach, during the first week in the same month, was of considerable interest to local observers, and, what was of greater significance, attracted much public attention also, prominence being given it by newspapers and in radio news sessions.

The first report reached me on May 31 and was to the effect that a 'strange' bird answering to the description of a White Ibis had been seen feeding in wet paddocks on the fringe of Oatlands, a Midland town. The following day, in company with Mr. Alan Craike, of Hobart, I went to Oatlands, and after a search of lagoons and water-holes, found the bird feeding along the edge of Dulverton Rivulet, about a mile west of the town. Over the last two or three years I have received a number of reports of birds supposed to be the White Ibis, seen feeding in estuaries and along deep rivers, and in those cases which I have been able to follow up, the species concerned has proved to be the White Egret (*Egretta alba*). But in this instance the description given me by observers was so much at variance with that of the Egret that I felt a special effort was needed to investigate the report.

On the same day that the bird was identified at Oatlands, a telephone message was received at home from Mr. Reg. Taylor, of Valleyfield, Epping, stating that what he believed to be another White Ibis had appeared on his property.

Later his surmise was confirmed, and in this case also there was but a single bird.

During the evening of June 1, radio news announced that nine White Ibis had come into a marsh at Westbury, a few miles inland from the coast in northern Tasmania. Two of these had been trapped by a local man, who maintained a small zoo, and were then in his aviary.

The following day a report was received that seven more were feeding on a marsh near Latrobe.

It is likely that the birds crossed Bass Strait in a single entity rather than as strays or individually, since they all appeared on the same date, May 30. This is an interesting aspect, because there was no strong north-westerly wind blowing then; in fact, the wind was from the south-west and snow lay on the heights. We have been inclined to attribute the presence of 'accidental visitors' in the past to their having drifted or been storm-blown in strong winds across the 200 miles of water that divides Tasmania from the Australian mainland, whence they undoubtedly come. In this case, the crossing must have been undertaken with deliberate intent, made necessary by the drying out of watered districts in other States.

On June 3 it was reported to the office of *The Advocate*, a Burnie newspaper, that a flock of some 50 birds was feeding on the golf links at Seabrook, which is between Burnie and Wynyard on the north-west coast. They had arrived a few days earlier. Reports of the appearance of odd birds also came from Cressy and Somerset.

So, within a month, the Tasmanian avifaunal list was marked by the addition of at least two 'new' species. There may yet prove to have been three, for reports suggest that another visitor is the Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), though I have been unable to confirm this by personal observation.

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**Mongolian Dotterels Wintering in Victoria.**—The occurrence of Mongolian Dotterels (*Charadrius mongolus*) in southern Australia is of sufficient rarity to warrant remark. Therefore it is interesting to note that a flock of this species wintered on the Spit, Corio Bay, adjacent to the Werribee Farm, during 1955.

Three birds were seen in the area on March 6, 1955—Messrs. D. Dickison, W. R. Wheeler and Dr. D. L. Serventy being in the writer's party.

Thirteen birds were noted on April 30, 1956, one being in nuptial plumage.

Thereafter the species was recorded on May 15, July 9, August 7, September 24, October 16 and 30, the maximum number seen being fourteen.

Three Mongolian Dotterels were noted on a trip to Mud Island, Port Phillip Bay, January 29 to 31, 1955.—HOWARD JARMAN, Parkville, Vic., 10/4/57.