

THE PACIFIC GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*).

Native Name—Kuaka.

During the northern summer the coasts and lands about the Arctic Circle are the haunts of millions of birds belonging to the group known as shore birds or waders. They vary in size, shape and colour, but practically all of them agree in having flexible beaks adapted for obtaining food from amongst sand, mud, or fine gravel. Godwits, of which there are several species, are of medium size and distinguished by a slightly upturned bill. When the northern nesting season is over, practically all waders fly south on migration, and some of them regularly cross the equator. The Pacific godwit, nesting in Eastern Siberia and Alaska, reaches New Zealand in great numbers every year.

During October flocks begin to arrive on the coasts, where they remain feeding until the end of March. River estuaries, tidal harbours, and sandy beaches are their chief haunts, and they range from North Cape to Stewart Island in such localities. Usually they are in flocks, hundreds and even thousands of birds together acting almost in unison as they move from one feeding ground to another. Feeding and resting between meals are their only concern when in these southern regions.

Between the end of their nesting season in August and their arrival here in October all the adult birds have shed their worn summer plumage and are clad in their "winter" garb of drab brownish grey and white. It is a pretty barred and spotted pattern as seen in one of the birds in the plate, but is without bright colour.

Any young birds that happen to come are much like their parents in appearance. With no concern but feeding in a rich feeding ground, and no family cares, the birds soon grow plump and regain the energy they have lost in the long flight south. Their food consists of tiny shellfish, shrimps and marine worms, each one a tiny morsel in itself, but nutritious and satisfying in any quantity.

By the middle of February a change in plumage begins to take place, and the old birds, especially the males, begin to show reddish chestnut feathers on the body, and by the end of March some are resplendent in full breeding plumage. It seems likely that only the younger female birds come to New Zealand, for females in red feather are seldom seen here. The female is distinguished by having a longer bill—a difference shown in the plate.

A good deal has been written about the final departure of godwits for their nesting grounds in March and April, and it