

The Red-Capped Dotterel

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Whilst searching for material on an old camping and feeding ground of the extinct Tasmanian Aborigines at Long Point (East Coast, Tas.) yesterday (21/10/28), I encountered the largest flock of Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) I have ever seen in the course of some 40 years' bird-observation in Tasmania. There were some 35 of these dear, little birds congregated on a small, sandy flat of not more than a quarter of an acre in extent.

I have visited this same spot a great many times during the past seven years, at all seasons, in the pursuit of Tasmanian artefacts, and I have always derived much pleasure in watching these birds and in finding their nests amidst the sand dunes, but the most I have seen together at any time has been about six, so I was pleasantly surprised at finding such a comparatively large number when I revisited the locality yesterday, after an absence of not more than two weeks.

As soon as I arrived on the spot, my attention was arrested by the behaviour of the whole flock, for they showed every indication of uneasiness at my presence, flying round me, alighting quite close to me in little parties, running excitedly about, twittering, calling, one might almost say scolding, giving every manifestation of concern. The reason for all this, whilst quickly suspected, was soon apparent, for, as I strolled slowly about the patch of sand covered more or less with midden material, and countless chips, broken hammers, etc., I discovered first one nest containing two lovely eggs, then a few yards away another, and then a third, all having a pair of eggs deposited in their tiny hollows lined with small fragments of polished shell. Continuing my search, two more nesting hollows were found, just ready for eggs, and a little distance further on in another old camp, I found another nest containing one egg, and I do not doubt that there were several I failed to notice.

The whole time I was present the birds kept up their agitated behaviour, uttering little, squeaky noises, chattering and complaining, and I only hope that none of the nests, which, of course, were studiously avoided, will be deserted on account of my intrusion.

I noticed one bird, probably a female, pretending to be hurt, and whenever she would lie over on her side, fluttering her wings, and squeaking, one of the others would run up to her, whereat she would jump up and make a little rush at it, as much as to say, "Don't you interfere in this," then after a short run she would go through the same performance again, no doubt trying to entice me away from her eggs.

Owing to the great wind- and rain-storms of the past two months, this site has undergone a considerable change as to its surface, and even since my last visit, about a fortnight ago, I could notice an appreciable difference, as I found the midden remains in little mounds, holding the sand together, and the birds had in every case chosen one of these mounds as the site for the nest. In one case the eggs were lying beside a short stick, in another a couple of stones were in close proximity, and, as I have previously noticed in the nidification of this species, there is nearly always some small object close to the nest, as if by design, so as to make the eggs less conspicuous.

I observed one pair of Hooded Dotterels (*Charadrius cucullatus*) in company with the Red-caps, and these, too, showed considerable uneasiness at my presence, uttering their beautiful low-pitched, flute-like call every now and then, as they flighted swiftly around, and ran within 15 and 20 yards of me. This species is not at all numerous on the East Coast, its numbers there being far exceeded on the great sandy wastes of the northern half of the West Coast.

Interesting it was, too, to note the first of the Double-banded Dotterel (*C. bicinctus*), represented by a single individual, no doubt not long arrived from New Zealand, after its long flight across the stormy wastes of the Tasman Sea. This specimen was in company of the Red-caps when I first made my appearance, but after a few minutes it took flight and alighted down on the beach hard by. The species is far more common on the West Coast, where I have seen it during mid-summer and early autumn in large flocks on the wide beaches extending northwards from Sandy Cape to Mt. Cameron West.

Camera Craft

Plover in Tasmania.—Since the introduction of the regulation giving total protection to the Plover in Tasmania these birds have increased to a noticeable extent in that State. In fact, at the present time, there is probably no