

were too far away for us to see if the Gulls succeeded in stealing the catch, but the association of the two species in the circumstances leaves no doubt that the Gulls are successful often enough to make their parasitic habit worth while.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 16/4/60.

**Lesser Redpoll and Skylark in South-west of the North Island, N.Z.**—This note derives from observations made, except where indicated otherwise, in Wellington Peninsula (1938-43, 1946-56), Upper Hutt, (1956-60), and South Manawatu, (1955-56). Though it was usual to see the Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) before 1953 in Wellington Peninsula in flocks of between ten to over one hundred birds, it was found there only in small numbers in 1953-56. I recorded twelve only on 9/5/53 on a ten-mile walk, found it virtually absent in known haunts in mid-winter and mid-summer 1954, and again in autumn and spring 1956. In 1946-53 Redpolls flew most of the year across Karori, a Wellington suburb, but less often from 1953. The species was not numerous in suitable country about Upper Hutt, twenty miles away, between 1956-60. No flock larger than twelve was seen, in contrast to the bigger flocks seen in Wellington Peninsula in 1946-53. In January 1960 it was practically absent from a nesting area not far from the Wakatikei River occupied by small numbers in two earlier nesting seasons. From these observations a decline appears possible in the numbers of the species between 1953-60 in the south-west of the North Island.

In that part of New Zealand the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) is somewhat rare. Between 1938-40, but not between 1946-56, I remember the occasional small flock of a dozen in winter on a Wellington Peninsula hillside. In 1946-56 it was only sparingly distributed through Wellington Peninsula hill country. Rongotai Aerodrome, Miramar, had a small population from 1938-55. However, its position there in 1960 is unknown following reconstruction of the airfield, with adjacent land subdivision for housing. Elsewhere in N.Z. *Bird Notes*, 1943, and *The Emu*, vol. 46, p. 32, it is reported common at Waikanae River estuary but the Skylark was seldom recorded there when I paid a number of visits in 1955-56. It was common, however at Te Horo, several miles north-east, in October 1955. The *Proceedings of the N.Z. Ecological Society*, 1959, p. 57, refer to the Skylark in small numbers in 1948-58 in the Hutt and Akatarawa Valleys respectively. It still visited small open spaces in built-up areas including adjacent gardens in Hutt Valley in 1959-60. Such behaviour suggests it was an abundant bird on flat land in the Hutt Valley until recent years. The Skylark was found in big flocks in early October 1959 ten miles east of upper Hutt Valley at Featherston on the Wairarapa Plain. These two areas are separated by the Rimutaka Range.—H. L. SECKER, Upper Hutt, N.Z., 12/5/60.