

## Birds Observed About the Lighthouse, Puysegur Point, Invercargill, N.Z.

WITH MENTION OF THOSE KILLED BY DASHING AGAINST THE LIGHTHOUSE PANES.

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PUYSEGUR Point is situated at the south-western corner of the South Island of New Zealand, on the southern point of Preservation Inlet, and is probably, at the present time, the best place in the South Island for observing what remain of the native birds.

Before coming to this bush-covered, outlandish spot, I had received very glowing accounts from former lighthouse-keepers regarding the bird-life of the place. The day of the Kiwi (*Apteryx australis*), the Roaroa (*A. haastii*), the Kakapo (*Stringops habroptilus*), and the Wattled Crow (*Glaucopis cinerea*) is, however, long past, but much of interest yet remains, although the "peculiar" have ceased to exist.

The first specimen of that remarkable bird, the White Gallinule (*Notornis mantelli*),\* was said to be obtained within a very short distance of this place. It was suggested that this famous bird was possibly an albino Bald-Coot.

The major portion of the birds, as is to be expected, comprises those whose habitat is the sea or shore; but no sea or shore species is at all common, the most plentiful being the land-birds, such as Pigeons, Hawks, and Fantails.

The native name, if any, follows the specific title.

Commencing with the sea-birds, I have observed the following:—

1. **Crested or Thick-billed Penguin**, *Catarrhactes chrysocome* (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*), Tawaki.—Occasional specimens are seen swimming or leaping from the water, but they are not at all numerous. The bird is said to breed in Dusky Sound at the present day, as it was recorded to do thirty years ago by Reischek. The bird is easily distinguished when in the sea by reason of its close-set, canary-yellow crest.

2. **Blue Penguin** (*Eudyptula minor*), Korora.—Very frequently met with in small flocks of ten or a dozen, standing upright on sand-banks or flat rocks in lines like soldiers, as is usual with all the Penguins. This bird has one or two rookeries in caves, within a mile or so of the entrance of the Inlet.

3. **The Little Blue or Fairy Penguin** (*E. undina*), Korora.—Slightly more abundant than the previous species. This bird must be delicate and easily killed, judging by the large numbers of dead ones seen.

4. **Black Oyster-catcher or Redbill** (*Hæmatopus fuliginosus*), Torea.—Only one pair has been observed, resting on Mackenzie Rock, but large flocks of upwards of a dozen are often seen flying or heard calling. Rather strange that the Pied variety is not seen here.

\* Figured by Gould in his Supplement (Plate 76). Matthews discusses this bird in his "Birds of Australia," pp. 247-255.—Eds.

5. **Blue Heron (Reef-Heron)** (*Demigretta sacra*), Matuku.—A single specimen, and a shy one at that. Easily distinguished by its mode of flight.

6. **Australian Snipe** (*Gallinago australis*).—Three only were seen on one occasion.

7. **White-throated Cormorant (Shag)** (*Phalacrocorax brevirostris*).—Generally admitted to be an endemic species. Very common here, as many as 17 being counted perched on one tree just above the water's edge. Said to breed in trees. Doubtful, but we'll see.

8. **Little Black Cormorant (Shag)** (*P. sulcirostris*).—Odd specimens only. I have seen a Skua Gull molest this bird on two occasions.

9. **White-faced Ternlet (Little Tern)** (*Sterna nereis*), Tara-iti.—Five small flocks only, usually of four or five birds, observed in three months, always during heavy southerly or south-easterly gales. They come and go with the wind.

10. **Pacific Gull** (*Gabrianus pacificus*), Karoro.—This common Gull is very uncommon here. Never more than two or three to be seen on any one day. Conditions are apparently unsuitable.

11. **Silver Gull** (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*).—Moderately common and very tame, flying within a few feet of one's head and resting on the sandy beaches until approached within about 3 yards.

12. **Southern Skua** (*Megalestris antarctica*), Hakoakoa.—Even the Maori branded this bird as a robber. Only an occasional specimen is seen, preying principally on the Silver Gulls. I take it that this bird breeds in this district, as I have seen two of its eggs in a rough collection here.

This completes the list of the sea-birds. Taking now the land-birds, we have, firstly:—

13. **The Mountain Parrot** (*Nestor notabilis*), Kea.—Said to be very numerous on the high lands at the head of the Inlet, but only one has been observed near the lighthouse. Was captured easily and caged, but did not live long.

14. **Brown Parrot** (*N. meridionalis*), Kaka.—Only noted now on rare occasions, and then only when the rata is in bloom, but it is heard more than seen. When the mining and sawmilling industries were in full swing, a few years back, the Kaka was very numerous, and was shot for sport (?). As many as 40 dead ones have been counted left on the beach after the sportsmen were satisfied. As Burns once wrote—

"Inhuman wretch, curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye."

15. **The South Island Wood-Hen** (*Ocydromus australis*), Weka.—Only one, and but a fleeting glimpse, at Observation Point. Captain Cook records having taken twenty pairs here. The introduction of the weasel has doomed this peculiar species to early extinction.

16. **Paradise Duck or Sheldrake** (*Casarca variegata*), Putangitangi.—Four specimens only, three of them drakes. Sometimes the duck and one drake are apart from the other drakes, but are usually within calling distance. Constant shooting with a pea-rifle in the hands of a poor marksman has rendered them exceedingly wary. Impossible to get nearer than five or six chains now.

17. **Native Pigeon** (*Carpophaga novæ-zealandiæ*), Kuku.—Our commonest bird. One or two can usually be shot within ten minutes'

walk of the homestead, but the times when fifty could be shot in one day are past. They now frequent the highest trees in the most inaccessible places.

18. **Bush-Hawk** (*Hieracidea ferox*), Karewarewa.—Common enough to be a pest and a source of danger to the poultry. Eleven observed in one day circling within 20 yards of the fowl-run. Sixteen counted on the road on the same day in one wide-flying flock.

19. **Morepork Owl** (*Athene novæ-zealandiæ*), Ruru.—Frequently heard in the bush away from the lighthouse, but rarely seen flying, and then only an odd one on clear, moonlit nights.

20. **Parson-Bird** (*Prosthemadera novæ-zealandiæ*), Tui.—Not very common—about twelve observed in three months. Its harsh, squawking cry, followed by a series of clear, pealing notes, is frequently heard, but it is a hard bird to locate in the gloomy parts of the bush which it frequents. I once watched a Tui from a distance of about 8 yards as it mimicked the thin, low song of the Rifleman, a bird with which I am very familiar. But for seeing the Tui, I would have vouched it was a Rifleman. Said to be numerous on Long Island.

21. **Bell or Mocking-Bird** (*Anthornis melanura*), Makomako.—The ringing notes of this species are heard on all sides during a walk through the bush, but, as both sexes sing, and constantly at that, the amount of song gives one an inaccurate idea of the number of these birds. Standing quietly and watching one as it sings, one realizes that it is not a common bird. Three or four are usually seen in a day's march.

22. **Black Fantail** (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*), Tiwakawaka.—Sometimes called the South Island Fantail, this and the following species are very welcome additions to this place, as they live mainly on the sand-flies which swarm here in thousands of thousands. Although there is a superabundance of their food, they are not at all common, just a few pairs being seen on occasions.

23. **Pied Fantail** (*R. flabellifera*), Piwakawaka.—Generally seen in company with the preceding, one Pied and one Black Fantail being seen together more often than two of the same variety. Strange that the different species should so mingle.

24. **Yellow-breasted Tit** (*Petroica macrocephala*), Miromiro.—Very rare; sometimes seen in company with a Fantail or Rifleman.

25. **Rifleman** (*Acanthisitta chloris*), Titipounamu.—Smallest of New Zealand birds. The Maori name, meaning "small greenstone," admirably describes this pretty wee green-backed songster. Only occasionally seen, more often than not quite solitary.

Killed by dashing against the lighthouse panes at night during thick weather:—

One **Dove-Petrel** (*Prion turtur*), Whiroia.

One **White-winged Petrel** (*Estrelata leucoptera*).

Four **Sombre Shearwaters or Mutton-Birds** (*Puffinus tristis*), Oii.

Two **White-fronted Terns** (*Sterna striata*), Tara.

All are comparatively common, with the exception of the White-winged Petrel, which is very rare. It struck the panes at about 10 p.m. on 27th April, 1919. The weather had been thick and misty for 30 hours, with moderate wind from the S.W., changing to W.