

A PETREL ON THE NORTH AUCKLAND MAINLAND.

By C. A. FLEMING.

In August, 1943, Dr H. Morrison, of Wellsford, told me that a petrel with a call like Cook's Petrel regularly passed over Wellsford and Warkworth on summer evenings. I heard the cry at Orewa from 14/11/43 fairly regularly until Christmas, at Kaukapakapa on 10/1/44, at Leigh on 28/1/44, and have previous records from Mahurangi Heads (23/12/35). To these records may be added cries heard at three separate places on the South Kaipara Heads Peninsula (19-21/1/44, R. B. Sibson), at Waiwera (December, 1943, S. D. Potter), and near Port Albert (several months and years, G. A. Buddle).

The calls may be syllabified as "kek-kek-kek," 4-8 "keks" being uttered nasally with machine-gun rapidity and occasionally terminating in a wild cry. They closely resemble a short, isolated burst of cicada song. They appear to be uttered at no great height, and a distinct impression is gained of swift movement in a constant direction inland. Cries commence in the hour after dusk, 8.30 in November and January, and are less frequent after 10.30. They are apparently little affected by moonlight and appeared especially clear and frequent after showery weather. At Mahurangi I glimpsed the birds in silhouette on a moonlit night.

Cookilaria cookii, *C. pycrofti*, and *Pterodroma inexpectata* all have similar cries, but the call of *pycrofti*, at least, is a softer and higher pitched "ti-ti-ti" than those under discussion. Observers who have heard Cook's Petrel at Little Barrier (G. A. Buddle and Dr Morrison) stress the similarity to the mainland calls and believe they are uttered by Cook's Petrels flying across the island in changing oceanic feeding grounds. Further, Major Buddle remembers hearing the calls in winter months. However, as none of us know the call of the Mottled Petrel except by repute, and as that species has a reputation for inland breeding (Canterbury, Ruahine Ra., Urewera, etc.) in former times, the possibility that it has continued to breed in some of the bushed ridges of the North cannot be dismissed. The ridge on which stand Tamahunga (1380ft) and The Dome (1037ft) and the high country adjacent to Mt. Flat Top (about 800ft) between Wainui and Makarau are possible locations for such breeding colonies. It is worth noting that similar calls heard at both Whangaparapara and Port Fitzroy, Great Barrier, in November, 1936, seemed to be softer and higher pitched than the Mahurangi ones, so that I associated the former with *cooki* and the latter with *inexpectata*. The identity of the bird must be left open until more tangible evidence is available.

I may take this opportunity to correct my identification of certain Chatham Island skulls as *inexpectata* ("The Emu," Vol. XXXVIII, p. 403). The skulls are definitely not those of any *Pterodroma* known to nest in such latitudes, but of a bird about the size of the Kermadec Island *P. neglecta*.

