

fronted tern (*Sterna striata*) on the southern ledges. There were at that time 38 nests (1 egg, 35 nests; 3 eggs, 1; 1 chick, c 2 days, 2). There appeared to be a number of birds without nests.

V.—COLVILLE GANNETRIES, SEPTEMBER 9, 1946.

By C. A. Fleming, Wellington.

On September 9, 1946, through the good offices of Mr. W. Tidey, Marine Department, Coromandel, I was able to visit the islets south-west of Colville in the eastern Hauraki Gulf, to assess the population of breeding gannets as part of the Ornithological Society's gannet census project.

This report is offered to provide a basis of comparison with counts made at other times. At this early date less than half the nests contained eggs, and adults readily left the colony, so that the basis for the counts was the number of nests at which freshly arranged seaweed, etc., suggested occupation by a pair intending to breed; such a count may give an over-estimate of the number of breeding pairs if submature birds habitually build nests without laying or if unoccupied mates ever build separate "play nests." On the other hand some eggs are laid in old nest sites without much preparation, and old nest sites were excluded from the present count. The sketch plans do not aspire to accuracy but should allow identification of the areas by later visitors.

Gannets now nest on three of the islets grouped on Admiralty Chart No. 2543 as Motu Kawai Group, 2-3 miles off the west side of Coromandel Peninsula.

1. **Motu Takapu (Gannet Rock).**—This, the outermost of the group, is a boat-shaped rock about 130 yards long rising above a tidal platform, the top accessible at the narrow north end from which the rock rises and expands to a width of about 20 yards before narrowing to the vertical-sided south end. Prominent steps, rock joints and boulders enabled subdivision of the area occupied by nests as shown in the sketch. The numbers of nests were: A, 24; B, 25; C, 23; D, 48; E, 19; F, 28; G, 20; H, 51; I, 9; J, 3; K, 6; L, 32. Thirty-seven per cent. of nests contained eggs, all of which were counted on this islet, the percentage in individual groups ranging from 21 to 57. There appeared to be room for more than the total of 288 nests found.

2. **Double Island, South-west Stack.**—From the boat and from Bush Island, 6 to 10 gannets were counted on the small islet off the tip of Double Island; some appeared to be on nests, and in default of more precise information the population is put at five pairs.

3. **Bush Island.**—This is a scrub-covered steep-sided island with high promontories on its western side, their summits occupied by a number of ganneries which can be grouped as follows:—

A. **South Promontory.**—Two groups of 48 and 54 nests and a ledge with six nests, totalling 108 nests, of which 44 (41%) had eggs.

B. **West Promontory.**—A narrow ridge with 44 nests to east; knob with 38; further ridge with 71; separated by rock from 32 on east of ridge top, and separate ledge 50 feet below with 97 nests; totalling 282 nests.

C. **West Stack.**—Reported old site (capacity about 20 nests), but no nests present though probably regular roost.

D. **Central Group**.—On rounded spur between B and E; a rectangular space 23 yards wide, falling seaward about 35 yards, occupied by a central mass of nests calculated at 355; five detached patches of 9, 6, 40, 4 and 12 nests, and a ledge below, 26 nests; totalling 472 nests.

E. **North Promontory**.—Top of ridge with 75, 80, 17, 119, 22, 210, 30 nests, detached ledge to west with 53, and spur end, 50 feet below, with 55; totalling 651 nests.

Summary.—

Motu Takapu	288 nests
Double Island (North-west Stack)	5
Bush Island—	
South Promontory	108
West Promontory	282
South-West Stack	0
Central Group	472
North-west Promontory	651

Total nests, equals breeding pairs 1806

General.—No groups of clearly “unemployed” birds nor juveniles were seen. In all three dead adults were seen. Some few ancient nest sites had not been newly lined and were not counted. Scrub to south of B and east of D (Bush Island) is being killed by encroaching gannets, a few nests being beneath low dying *Coprosma* and *Hymenanthera* shrubs. Guano has been taken with some regularity by mainland farmers, reputedly in February, and some 100 bags were stacked on the shore of Bush Island; there was no sign that the gannetries had suffered from this. No predatory birds (gulls, etc.) seen at the gannetries. Mr. P. Wood told Mr. R. B. Sibson that he had assessed the Colville gannetries at 1200 pairs in about 1940. Sibson himself visited Bush Island in January, 1942, and judged that “two main colonies on Bush Island must have 400 pairs each; beside these there are two smaller colonies with some scores of pairs. Then Gannet Rock is white with birds, probably 4-500 pairs” (pers. comm. from field notes). His estimation for the whole was 1400 pairs. Mr. J. Ngapo, Coromandel, told me (9/9/46) that Gannet Rock had once been the chief gannetry, and that he had noticed a great difference on his return from war service. Mr. W. Gilliver, Marine Department, Tauranga, has told me (13/1/47) that there have been great increases during the past decade, the “new” areas being: Double Island Stack, South Promontory, lower ledge of N.W. Promontory, and lower parts of Central Group.

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