

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GANNET CENSUS.

VI.—MAHUKI GANNETRY, GREAT BARRIER.

By W. M. Hamilton.

On December 27, 1946, a party of five (Drs. C. P. McMeekan and H. Morrison and Messrs. N. Hamilton, A. Trotter and the writer) visited the gannetry at Great Barrier. The gannetry is situated on the north-west point of the island known locally as Gannet Island and shown on the Admiralty Chart as Mahuki, the most south-westerly of the Broken or Pig Islands. Anvil Island is a large stack lying close to the south-west of Mahuki. The latter is 180 acres in extent and rises to an estimated height of 400 feet. It is stated to be Native land without individual title. A small flock of sheep and one or two head of cattle are grazed on the island.

Owing to strong westerly winds the party landed on the eastern side of the island and proceeded overland to the gannetry. As soon as we appeared in sight of the colony, at a distance of 300-400 yards, the birds (estimated at 600-700) took to the wing, only twenty or so remaining on nests. A small number of sheep and lambs, startled by our approach, also ran out on to the gannetry, so we sat on the ridge and waited until the sheep left the colony and the majority of the gannets (*Morus serrator*) gradually returned (perhaps 30 minutes).

As soon as we started down the slope towards the colony the gannets again took flight only some twenty remaining and a number of these flew off as we approached. The birds were obviously very scared and quite abnormal in behaviour. The birds would not return while we remained on the colony and since none of the ridges command the whole colony a count could not be made. The numbers were estimated at 300-350 breeding pairs. This estimate was later confirmed by Mr. R. Cooper, of Port Fitzroy, who estimated the normal population at 300 pairs (not based on count).

The gannetry contained one chick (partly feathered) and 50 new-laid eggs. In view of this very discontinuous distribution of eggs and chicks and particularly in view of the very peculiar behaviour of the gannets themselves it appeared to us that the colony had been raided, probably between December 20-23, and all eggs and chicks removed.

One member of the party (N.H.) made a further visit to the colony approximately a month later and found only one egg (being incubated) and no chicks at all.

The colony could easily be fenced to prevent the ingress of stock and this would probably suffice to deter casual visitors from entering the colony. Less than one chain of fencing would be necessary but some means would have to be devised to permit the young gannets to reach the grassy slopes of the island which normally form their exercise ground. There may be legal difficulties in declaring the area a sanctuary and fencing as suggested, but it is urged that some such steps are necessary if the colony is to be preserved.

VII.—NEW GANNETRY OFF KARAKA POINT.

By G. A. Buddle.

A new gannetry has been discovered off Karaka Point, south of Hohoura and north of Doubtless Bay, North Auckland. Gannets (*Morus serrator*) were nesting on two small rocks about a mile off Karaka Point

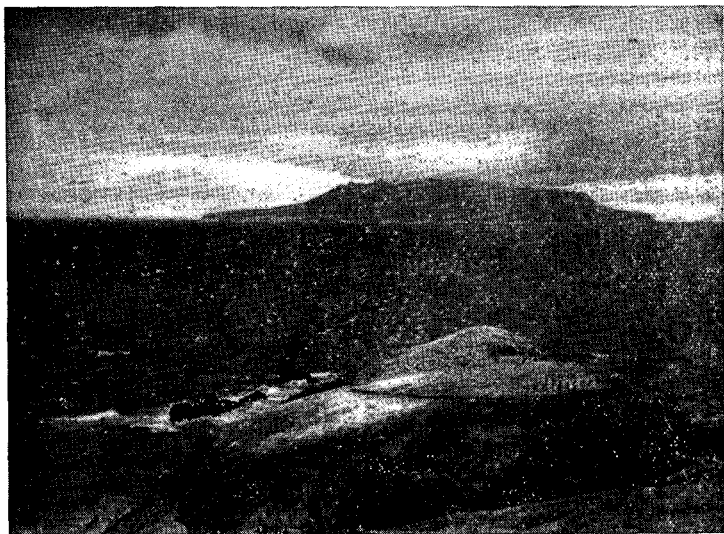


Photo. W. M. Hamilton.

Birds leaving colony on approach of observers.
Little Barrier Island sanctuary on skyline.



Photo. C. A. Fleming.

Gannetry, 28/11/1934. Contrast conditions described in 1946-47 season.

MOHUKI GANNETRY, GREAT BARRIER.

are problems which require more data, in other years and at other gannetries, for their solution.

GANNETS OF THE THREE KINGS (Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 130).—Correction: It was stated that there were no nesting colonies of gannets or gulls on West King, North-east King and Great King. Actually, there are several very large breeding colonies of red-billed gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae*) on Great King.—G. A. Buddle.

MAHUKI GANNETRY, GREAT BARRIER.—(Vol. 2, No. 6, plate 1) The lower photograph was taken on 28/2/34, and not on 28/11/34 as stated.

NUMBER OF KEAS.—The following figures, supplied by courtesy of the Department of Internal Affairs, whose permission I have to publish them, were compiled by the Department of Agriculture from the amount of the subsidy paid to county councils and represent the number of keas (*Nestor notabilis*) destroyed on which bounties were claimed. Figures are given for 1943, 1944 and 1945 in that order, followed by the total in each case:—Nelson: Waimea C.C., nil, nil, 84, 84. Marlborough: Marlborough C.C., nil, nil, 49, 49. Westland: Westland C.C., 175, 387, 757, 1319. Canterbury: Amuri C.C., 246, 57, 58, 361; Tawera C.C., nil, 6, 96, 102; Selwyn C.C., 59, 93, 160, 312; Ashburton C.C., 77, 27, 166, 270; McKenzie C.C., nil, nil, 255, 255. Otago: Waitaki C.C., 122, nil, 139, 261; Vincent C.C., 592, 207, 265, 1064; Lake C.C., 1059, 888, 795, 2742. Totals: 2330, 1665, 2824, 6819.—J. M. Cunningham.

BIRDS AT HALKETT.—Birds recorded at Halkett, Canterbury, 15-18 miles west of Christchurch (see classified notes for scientific names): Observed in the district every day: Black-backed gull, blackbird, chaffinch, circl bunting (?), goldfinch, greenfinch, harrier, hedge-sparrow, white-backed magpie, little owl, pipit, Californian quail, redpoll, rock pigeon, skylark, sparrow, starling, thrush, yellow-hammer. Seen seasonally or occasionally: Black-billed gull, Canadian goose, Caspian tern, fantail, grey warbler, kingfisher, pheasant, pied stilt, black shag, black swan, black-fronted tern, white-eye, grey duck, rook, banded dotterel. Seen rarely: Pukeko, shining cuckoo. Birds that fly in late afternoon or evening towards Waimakariri River bed from paddocks: Black-backed gull, black-billed gull, white-backed magpie, Caspian tern, black-fronted tern, Canadian goose, sometimes grey duck and black swan.—Halkett School Group.

CRESTED GREBE IN SALT WATER.—This morning, 30/10/47, I was surprised to see a crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) swimming and diving in the Heathcote Estuary. The bird swam with the outgoing tide for about 50 yards, doing an occasional dive, and then swam back, passing within twenty yards of me and performed a dive right in front of myself and a neighbour. Its crest was bright chestnut when viewed from the front and the bird looked to be in good condition. There had been three days of strong southerly wind, with a very cold atmosphere and almost continuous rain—this no doubt was responsible for this most unusual visitor. Dr. R. A. Falla can find no previous record of grebes in salt water in New Zealand.—G. Guy, Christchurch.