

and the shape and length of its bill. The groove on the upper mandible was not seen, the light being the wrong way. It did not call when it flew.

D.V.M., on 10/2/63, saw and heard at the same place what was most likely the same bird. The call was a short burst of even whistled notes; but not enough to indicate whether it was *incanus* or *brevipes*, though the choice of habitat seems to favour *brevipes*. This is the fifth locality in the South Island to produce a tattler in recent years and the most southerly. It is also the only record of a tattler inland and away from tideline or saltmarsh.

H. R. McKENZIE

D. V. MERTON

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ANOTHER KAIPARA RECORD OF THE LESSER FRIGATE-BIRD

While fishing on 23/3/63, three miles below Moturemo Island on the edge of the Tauhoa Channel, I saw two birds in combat, coming from a southerly direction. As they passed about a chain away at a height of only fifty feet, I saw that one was a Caspian Tern and the attacker a male Lesser Frigate-Bird (*Fregata ariel*). The tern appeared exhausted and screamed every few seconds. The slightly larger frigate-bird showed flashing white patches under each wing-root and the long forked tail was clearly visible.

The flight continued north with slight zig-zags and undulations for the next half-minute, during which both birds gained considerable height. While still in view they suddenly disengaged, the black frigate-bird making no attempt to gather any disgorged fish, but continuing on course. The Caspian Tern immediately turned west, spread its wings and glided for the South Head. Not once did the frigate-bird miss a wing beat in its heavy labouring flight. It is, indeed, a puzzle to me how a Lesser Frigate-bird can stay air-borne for long on its long thin wings, which resemble razor-straps. It is now just over three years since I saw a Lesser Frigate-Bird's attack on a Gannet (*S. serrator*) in much the same area (*Notornis* IX, 109).

F. P. HUDSON

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BROWN BOOBY AND GREY NODDY IN NORTHLAND WATERS

On the northern coast of the Takatu Peninsula and seaward of Maungatawhiri Beach, Pied and Little Shags roost in a group of pohutukawas which fringe the top of a cliff. Below the roost on a shelf twenty feet above the high-tide mark, a juvenile Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) may have roosted for some time with the shags. The first notice I had of the bird was on 27/12/62 when there was a sudden, heavy flapping directly above my head. The Booby lost height until it caught the wind. It flew out to sea, but soon returned. When it saw me, it veered away once more. From such close range, with 12 x 50 binoculars, such salient features as the chocolate-brown coloration, the lighter underparts, the long V-shaped white on the underwing and the pale face could not be missed. As it took off, the splayed orange feet and the white on the underwing were particularly striking. A Gannet (*S. serrator*) flying past enabled comparisons to be made. The Booby was slightly smaller and lighter in build. Whereas the Gannet soared

up and down, high then low over the water, the Booby flew straight and low. The shelf on which the Booby was roosting was well manured. A brown feather and fish-bones were present. This Booby was very similar to one seen off Waiheke on 7/9/62 (*Notornis* X, 167), but as far as I can remember, the Waiheke Booby was paler on the abdomen.

While staying at the Bay of Islands, I took a trip to Cape Brett on 11/1/63 and the launch put in at the lighthouse bay to drop supplies. Opposite the light was a flourishing colony of Red-billed Gulls (*L. scopulinus*) and on the outskirts of the colony some White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*) were nesting. A strange bird, the size of a tern, flying over the gulls which were sitting on the rocks just above high-water mark, attracted my attention. It was fairly uniformly blue grey; the tail was forked and the bill was dark. Clearly it was a Blue-grey Noddy or Ternlet (*Procelsterna cerulea*). I had ample time to watch it, as it flew past the launch about sixty yards away following the shoreline. From time to time it dipped as if to fish, all the while keeping close inshore. Finally as the launch moved out of the bay, the Ternlet passed round the point.

Records of these small tropical noddies in northern New Zealand waters are slowly accumulating. In January, 1954, Major Magnus Johnson sighted one, nine miles north of Cape Brett (*Notornis* VI, 84). The species may indeed be a regular summer visitor to the Northland coast.

M. J. HOGG

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PREDATORY HABITS OF THE BLACK-BACKED GULL

An interesting feature of the 1962-63 breeding season on Motuotamatea (Schnapper Rock), at New Plymouth, has been the observed predation by Black-backed Gulls (*L. dominicanus*) on White-fronted Terns (*S. striata*). Schnapper Rock is one of two small islets near Port Taranaki readily accessible at low water, and is a popular breeding ground for a small number of Red-billed Gulls (*L. scopulinus*) and White-fronted Terns. Although in past years, only an odd pair of Black-backed Gulls has been known to nest there, this season saw five pairs nest and breed successfully — one pair on the northwest face and four pairs on the southeast face. Three pairs of these gulls nested together at one end of a small mixed Red-billed Gull and tern colony and it is in this group that the predatory habits were observed.

From 13/12/62 when the first of the Black-backed Gull chicks hatched out, to 27/1/63, a total of 24 terns had been killed. Of these 24, 16 were young birds reared this season (8 had been banded earlier in the season), the remainder being adult birds. In addition to the terns, the mutilated remains of a young Starling (*S. vulgaris*) and an adult Blackbird (*T. merula*) were also found.

Aspects of this predation which arouse interest are, firstly, the fact that in all cases, the young birds killed had all attained the powers of flight. Although there was a significant number of non-flying chicks within the near vicinity of the gull nests, no mutilated carcasses indicating a Black-backed Gull attack were found. On 8/1/63, an act of predation was witnessed. The gull swooped on the young flying tern, hitting it in the centre of the back with its extended feet. Before the tern could recover, the gull pecked it viciously in the region of the back of the