

REFERENCES

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NOTES ON BIRDS ON RUAPUKE ISLAND, FOVEAUX STRAIT

Ruapuke Island, in the eastern approaches of Foveaux Strait, was visited between 20th and 24th February, 1963, in the course of geological field work, and some scattered observations on the birds seen during this visit are recorded here. These notes are sketchy, and it is hoped that they can be augmented by more detailed observations in the future. Most of the geological work was of necessity confined to the shore-line, and unfortunately the small area of bush remaining was not visited.

Ruapuke covers about 3,400 acres, and like most of the small islands in Foveaux Strait is low-lying: the highest point is only 140 ft. above sea level. At the present time only one land-owner, Mr. Alfred Topi, lives permanently on the island. Except for a relatively small area of bush in its central part, the island comprises open scrub-land, low-lying swampy areas with much *Phormium tenax*, and tussocky and grassed areas used for grazing about 3,000 sheep. The coast-line is irregular and indented, low rocky cliffs alternating with fine dune-backed beaches. Of the latter, several are separated by sandy spits from small fresh or brackish lagoons.

According to Mr. Topi, a few Muttonbirds (*P. griseus*) still breed on Ruapuke, but they are reported to be much more numerous on the nearby small islands, including the Hazelburgh group, three miles south-south-west of Henrietta Bay. Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls were constantly seen, with a small number of White-fronted Terns. A single heron, probably a Reef Heron, was seen in the distance, perching at the edge of cliffs on the eastern side of the island.

Grey Ducks, Black Swans, and Canada Geese are reported by Mr. Topi to come over to the lagoons on Ruapuke from Waituna Lagoon, 12 miles to the north, during the shooting season.

Pairs of Black Oystercatchers were seen on most of the beaches, and a single Pied Oystercatcher at Henrietta Bay. A few Pied Stilts were present beside the lagoon (Waitokariro) behind Henrietta Bay. Banded Dotterels find ideal nesting sites on areas of sandy alluvium at two localities, namely Waioihe Bay (near North Head) and the spit at Tauatemaku Lagoon, and many birds were seen flocking at the latter place.

Wekas, presumably the same sub-species as that on Stewart Island, are present over the whole island. A single Harrier was seen. Parakeets, probably Red-fronted, were twice observed flying over open scrubby ground, while Bellbirds were present in the plantation at Mr. Topi's house at Henrietta Bay. Mr. Topi mentioned that Bush Pigeons are also present. Almost certainly the numbers of birds, such as parakeet and pigeon, vary considerably throughout the year, with movement to and from Stewart Island and some of the other small islands in Foveaux Strait.

The Pipit was commonly seen in all areas visited, and is probably the most abundant land bird. Apart from small flocks of Starlings, introduced passerine birds appeared to be rare.

— W. A. WATTERS