

SPOTTED SHAGS ON THE COROMANDEL COAST

On 28/2/65 as we approached Motu Kahaua, the most northerly of the islands to the west of the Coromandel Peninsula, we were delighted to see a large group of Spotted Shags (*S. punctatus*) resting on the adjoining rocky islet. Conditions were ideal and as we rowed closer about 240 birds left their roost and settled down to fish less than a quarter of a mile away. From the sea 25 nests were visible. Of these two contained well grown chicks, two had birds apparently sitting, three were unoccupied, and the rest had a pair of birds in attendance. The islet is 150ft. high and most of the nests were on the northern and eastern sides, where the typical mushroom shaped formation provides good shelter.

During periodic visits to this coast over the last twelve years, our only other sightings of Spotted Shags have been single birds on three occasions and one group of nine, all near Hautapu Pt., some four miles away on the mainland.

— ANTHEA GOODWIN



A STARLING ROOST IN KAIPARA HARBOUR

Moturemu is a prominent island lying off the mouth of the Tauhoa Creek in the southern portion of Kaipara Harbour. It is of considerable interest to naturalists as Grey-faced Petrels (*P. macroptera*) breed there and the rare Kaka Beak (*Clanthus puniceus*) once grew there, though it now appears to have died out. The island for many years has been used as a roost by large numbers of Starlings (*S. vulgaris*).

On 20/9/61 Marcus Dill and I watched the Starlings arrive between sundown and nightfall. I made a rough calculation. About ten per second crossed a given point for fifteen minutes as the Starlings flew in from the direction of Hoteo. I averaged out the trickle and the surges as best I could. This gives a total of 9000 from one direction; but I would say that more came from the direction of Glorit. There were only two streams and their different heights were quite noticeable. The birds from the south crossed the harbour higher than the island and dived with a loud swooshing to settle, while the Hoteo birds from the north flew low and appeared to bounce up and over the shell-bank where we moor the boat. There was a light, cold south-west breeze. If my estimate is at all correct, perhaps 20,000 Starlings were roosting at that time on Moturemo.

We were unable to find as much as a seedling of Kaka Beak, although conditions appeared suitable. However, we did find two Karos growing well in the humus, and in flower, I should think, for the first time. Marcus Dill thinks there may be a tree of this species on Old Man's Nose, a high point a few miles north. If so, that is the only Karo we know on that side. It is amazing what the Starlings bring — blackberry, ivy, inkweed, privet, wattle (*Acacia lophantha*), wharangi, box thorn — which we managed to pull out — and a lot of other foreign stuff. The Starlings kill off pohutukawa thickets or make them decidedly sick and then move away, leaving the ground open to the light. There are many seedlings of totara and kahikatea.

— FRANK HUDSON