

considerable advantage to the Weka in preying upon the Saddleback, as seems to be the case on Inner Chetwode Island.

One can only speculate on the reasons for the total absence from Codfish of the Saddleback, Robin (*Petroica australis*), Wren (*Xenicus longipes*), and Snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica iredalei*), all of which were abundant on Big South Cape prior to the invasion of black rats in 1963. It is possible that separation from Stewart Island occurred much earlier in the case of Codfish than of Big South Cape, so that Codfish may have been populated by colonisation from Stewart Island. The sheer stark mountains of the Ruggedy Range across the two mile wide channel from Codfish could well have proved a barrier to species either incapable of sustained flight, or unwilling to undertake sustained flight above the bush canopy. The strong subspeciation of the Codfish Island Fernbird seems to support this theory of early separation.

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#### SHORT NOTE

##### BLACK SHAGS FLYING WITH BILLS AGAPE

At Kapiti on 6/4/68 two Black Shags (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) flew north at a height of a couple of hundred feet near the coastline. Both birds had their bills wide open and a few minutes later a single bird was seen to fly south, also with its bill open. Perhaps the birds had swallowed large fish and were uncomfortable: but high purposeful flight is unusual at such times. The air, however, was still and very hot and one wonders if the action was perhaps a cooling mechanism, in the way a dog pants with its tongue out. In warm weather nesting birds may sometimes be seen with their bills open, and "resting birds exposed to hot sun" sometimes even pant. (*A New Dict. of Birds*, ed. A. L. Thomson, 1964, p. 697).

I have however not previously seen a bird flying with its bill open, nor am I able to find any explanation for it, or even that such a habit has been recorded, in New Zealand or overseas literature. I would be interested to know of any published reference to it.

— J. M. Cunningham