

INTRODUCED BIRDS

Song Thrush. These outer islands do not suit the Song Thrush, which was not identified for certain on the Big Chicken in 1953 nor on Hen I. in 1954, although it was recorded there in 1948.

Blackbird. The Blackbird appears to be a more thrustful colonizer than the Song Thrush. On the Big Chicken seven males were noted as singing and another was heard on the Eastern Chicken. On Hen I. Blackbirds were not so easily found, only four singing males being located. A nest which contained four eggs was found.

Dunnock. Singing males were heard in four separate places on the Big Chicken. On Hen I. the Dunnock was recorded in 1948, but in 1954 its presence, though suspected, was not proved.

Chaffinch. At least five singing males were noted on the Big Chicken. Somewhat anomalously this species could not be found on Hen I. either in 1948 or in 1954, despite diligent searching.

Starling. A few pairs about the cliffs and one flock of about eighty birds on the Chickens. Rather scarce on Hen I.

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BROWN BOOBY IN THE HAURAKI GULF

By P. A. S. STEIN

Gannets and boobies are very like each other in general form. The main differences are minor ones; the extent of feathering on the throat, and the nature of the surface of the front toes. The booby's beak runs back into a naked light-coloured area, from which the eyes stare out as through a mask, and the skin of the feet has no suggestion of scales on its surface. Of much more importance to us is the fact that while the gannet breeds in temperate climates, the booby is essentially a bird of the tropics.

In Australia both Blue-faced and Brown Boobies breed on islands of the Great Barrier Reef. In the Capricorn Group, there are large rookeries at Hoskyn and at Fairfax Island. G. F. Hooley wrote in January 1955 about a ringed bird that he had picked up on Curtis Island (23° S). It was a stranger to him, but the ring number, 17006, told us that it was a year-old gannet. In comparing it with the local 'gannets' he said:

'It was slightly larger than our Brown Boobies which are very common at Curtis Island. There are hundreds breeding on North West Island, about sixty miles north of us, and indeed on most of the Reef islands.'

In February, writing from Port Stephens (34° S) about a two-year-old gannet chick, No. 15601, A. F. D'Ombrian said:

'They have been very scarce for four years, but during the last year they have appeared again in greater numbers. Last summer I photographed a Brown Gannet which was sitting on the floating limb of a tree. It is the first record I have made of the Brown Gannet in these waters, as I think it is mostly an inhabitant of the north-east part of the coast and the Barrier Reef.'

On the coast of Australia the boobies keep mainly to the north of the Tropic of Capricorn, the gannets to the south.

Further to the east there are other breeding places, including some in the neighbourhood of Fiji. We have very few records of stragglers from either area appearing as far south as New Zealand. One was found, at Sunday Island in the Kermadecs, but only two others were seen in New Zealand up to 1952. The former, shot at Napier in July 1884, was described in detail by A. Hamilton (Transactions of N.Z. Institute, Vol. 21, 1889, page 128). Few details are known about the other, which was found at the Bay of Islands about 1910. Then, after a break of forty years, one was seen at Horuhoru, the gannet rookery to the north of Waiheke, in the Hauraki Gulf, on 8 March 1952 by P. A. S. Stein. After comparing descriptions and sketches, made on the spot, with skins of Fiji Brown Boobies (*Sula leucogaster*), E. G. Turbott identified the stranger as an immature bird in wholly brown plumage. There had been continual northerly winds from Fiji for a month and the bird was in close association with a group of gannet chicks about to depart (*Notornis*, Vol. 4, No. 8, April 1952, page 213).

Ten months later, on 21 January 1953, while counting the chicks on Motutakapu, which is 12 miles east of Horuhoru in the Colville Group, P. F. Stein noticed an adult Brown Booby among the gannets there (*Notornis*, Vol. 5, No. 5, July 1953, page 165). There was little doubt that the immature bird blown south from Fiji by the strong northerlies of February 1952 had spent the winter in company with New Zealand adult gannets, and during that period had developed its mature plumage. Since then three trips have been made to Motutakapu, but nothing has been seen there of the booby.

On 27 March 1955, through the kindness of Captain J. A. Lawler, members of the Auckland section of the Forest and Bird Protection Society were able to enjoy a trip to Kawau and back in the launch *Ngaroma*. Weather conditions — sunshine and a slight breeze — were perfect for observing birds at sea. Between Rangitoto and Kawau, Fluttering, Flesh-footed and Buller's Shearwaters were plentiful, and young gannets in brown mottled plumage were surprisingly common, more than twenty being recorded during the day.

As Tiri Tiri came abeam, R. B. Sibson was watching some of these young gannets as with shearwaters and gulls they were working over shoaling fish, when among them he saw a much darker gannet-like bird. As it swung round the light fell upon its characteristic features — blueish bill, dark brown neck with the brown ending abruptly, white belly, and underwing pattern, which were all seen clearly before it settled. E. G. Turbott also saw the bird, which was obviously a Brown Booby.

It is not unlikely that every year, in the late summer, a few tropical sea-birds reach the northern waters of New Zealand. Thus this year, Frigate Birds (*Fregata* sp.) have been reported from Parengarenga and the Waipu coast, and a Red-tailed Tropic Bird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) was seen by Master d'E. C. Darby when about 150 miles from Cuvier Island on the Panama route.

At the same time it is possible that the Tiri Tiri brown booby was the one seen in 1952 and again in 1953. A few days later this possibility became much nearer a probability when P. F. Stein on 11 April saw an adult brown booby at Horuhoru, on the same slope and within a few yards of where the original bird was seen three years before on 8/3/52. A late search was being made for young gannets. The Central Terraces on Horuhoru were found to be occupied by over two hundred adults — a most unusual thing in April — and among them was a brown booby. As the launch *Waitangi* turned in to anchor, the adult gannets began to stream down from the cliff. The booby went with them, but, passing between the launch and the sun, it did not show up to advantage. As boobies often fly in large figure-eights, the launch was put about to follow the birds out to sea. After going for half a mile to the north-west the booby wheeled round to the south and, returning, passed within 30 feet of the crew, who had a splendid view of its colour

and markings. The *Waitangi* again followed. As it neared Gannet Rock the booby banked sharply to begin another figure-eight. This brought the under surface of the wings nearly at right angles to the light, and gave a clear view of the underwing pattern from a distance of only a few yards.

Birdwatchers who have the opportunity are asked to be on the look-out for this bird; there may be more than one. It will be associating with other gannets. Standing among them it keeps its tail further down and balances further back on its legs. It seems an inch or more shorter than our gannets. In the air its wingspread is noticeably less — say, 66 inches instead of 70.

The feathers are of two colours, a rich, deep, warm brown (not as dark or lifeless as chocolate), and white. The colour changes abruptly from one area to another. The head, neck, back, tail, and top of the wings are brown. The belly and part of the under surface of the wings are white. From below, the wingtips are brown and a brown border encloses the white parts of the remainder of the wings. This border is much narrower in front than behind, and curves forward slightly to meet up with the brown part of the neck. The beak is light in colour and in many lights has a tinge of blue. Above and below the beak, the face and neck are bare and similar in colour. Against the rich brown of the head and neck, this light face area seems most unnatural, and the eyes are very prominent in it. Much the same effect would be obtained if a brown knitted balaclava were pulled over the head of a white bird and down the neck to wing level. The horn-coloured beak and light face would be seen through the opening in the balaclava, and the lower end where it ringed the neck would project slightly, as they seem to on the booby.

When the bird is standing at rest, the tops of the feet are seen. They are yellowish and may have a tinge of orange. When the booby is flying, it does not conceal its legs and feet as does the gannet. The legs appear well apart outside the feathers. The feet seem very dark against the underside of the bird and are so large that they make a band across the body and tail. The tail is generally longer than the gannet's and comes to a finer point in flight. When the booby hovers, however, it can spread the tail feathers out wide and a V-shaped gap appears between the middle feathers.

FURTHER NOTES ON WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN (*C. leucopterus*) IN MANUKAU

By R. B. SIBSON

Since the White-winged Black Tern which spent the winter of 1953 (*Notornis*, 6.46) at Ascot, Mangere, was last seen on 27/8/53, there have been two more occurrences of this interesting vagrant in Manukau Harbour.

On 30/5/54 Mr D. A. Urquhart saw a W.W.B.T. flying along the shore at Karaka. It was a conspicuous bird in breeding plumage and was being pursued by a flock of godwits, from which different individuals in turn headed the pursuit. To escape them the W.W.B.T. climbed to 500-600 feet and flew inland.

On 30/10/54 I visited a corner of Manukau Harbour near Otahuhu, where in spring there are usually many non-breeding stilts. As the tide comes in, these gather on a small sandbank and at this season they are often joined by hundreds of newly arrived godwits. But stilts and godwits were quickly forgotten when I noticed a W.W.B.T. flitting up and down the tideline and over the flats, favouring especially those parts which were carpeted with a growth of green alga, which on examination appeared to be the breeding ground of some species of marine fly. The alga has been identified by Professor V. J. Chapman as a species of *Enteromorpha*, 'probably *E. intestinalis forma tubulosa*'. The tern was flying low in the manner typical of this species, lightly taking food near the surface of ground or water. Once when it was chased by a Red-billed Gull and climbed higher, I saw that there were the remains of nuptial black on the underside of the