

THE BIRDS OF STEPHENSON ISLAND, WHANGAROA

By BRIAN D. BELL

A party comprising R. T. Adams, N. B. Ewing and the author visited Stephenson Island on 31/7/59, stayed overnight and left the following day. The island lies $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-north-east of the entrance to Whangaroa Harbour. It is approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile wide and lies from north-west to south-east. The highest point is 427 feet above sea-level. The north-eastern face is almost perpendicular. The south-western slopes are more gentle but the extreme edge is also cliff-bound.

The island was formerly leased by the Maori owners and was heavily grazed but for the last few years has been unstocked and at present is covered with a thick growth of grass. There are some pohutukawa trees about the fringe and some very small areas of coastal bush in the gullies. In some areas there are clumps of flax and *Mariscus*. There are small streams in several gullies and at the main landing beach there is an old cottage and woolshed. Some of the fences are still standing but they are almost covered with the heavy growth of grass. The Kiore (*Rattus exulans*) is common on the island and its tunnels through the grass are everywhere. The following is a classified list of the birds recorded:

Little Blue Penguin. One was seen off the island and others heard coming ashore in places that were inaccessible too us, but they were not as common as expected.

Allied Shearwater. These small shearwaters, belonging to the robust race *haurakiensis*, were found covering fresh eggs. There would be at least 100 burrows on the island, but this species was less numerous than the Grey-faced Petrel, judging from the calling as the birds were coming ashore. The burrows were found principally on the lower south-west side of the island.

Grey-faced Petrel. This petrel breeds all over the island in limited numbers and they were noisy coming ashore. They could not be called numerous when compared with populations on the Bay of Plenty islands. They were covering relatively fresh eggs and in many cases the nesting chamber was thickly lined with grass. The young of this species are taken annually on this island by the Maoris.

Diving Petrel. This species was coming ashore in small numbers around the island and was utilising the narrow fringe immediately above the cliffs and, it appeared, may be using the cliffs as well.

Gannet. Only the occasional bird was seen from the shore.

Pied Shag. At least six feeding about the island and resting on rocks.

White-throated Shag. One bird seen on three occasions.

Black-backed Gull. About eight scattered around the island and these appeared to be taking up territories.

Harrier. Two seen.

Kingfisher. Three single birds seen at different times about the same area, possibly the same bird.

Skylark. Four seen (two together).

Blackbird. One seen by N.B.E. and another heard.

Pipit. Two seen.

White-eye. A small flock seen on two occasions.

Chaffinch. One seen and another heard.

Goldfinch. Two single birds seen on different occasions.

Yellowhammer. Four seen (two together).

Starling. A flock of about ten birds seen in the landing bay on the morning of our departure.

Conclusion.—At first sight this island looked very uninteresting and it was a pleasant surprise to find three species of petrel (and in particular the Allied Shearwater) persisting on an island which has been so modified for years by clearing and grazing. The island has not before been recorded as a breeding area for either Allied Shearwater or Diving Petrel. This illustrates the importance of even some of our unconsidered and less attractive offshore islands.



MYNA ROOSTS IN CLEVEDON-ARDMORE AREA, 1952 - 1956

By H. R. McKENZIE

The Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) came to Clevedon in odd pairs about November, 1943, and built up in numbers from small lots in 1944 to larger and more numerous flocks in 1949. Breeding began when only a few pairs were present, but, in my opinion, could have accounted for only a small part of the build-up. Apparently a northward wave moved up from the Waikato district. The further move northwards from South Auckland seems to have been slower and in lesser numbers. It has now, in 1959, reached and passed Whangarei.

The first roost noted in the Clevedon area was reported in the winter of 1952 by member P. H. Orum. Over 200 birds used a row of *Cupressus macrocarpa* on his farm (*Notornis* V, 104). In 1953, a similar number roosted there again (*Notornis* V, 238). In 1954 the number grew to c. 400, but in that year they all left early in August (*Notornis* VI, 108), obviously having moved to another roost.

In the winter of 1955, from my home at Clevedon, I noticed evening flights going south-west. I telephoned several farmers in that direction who had what I thought were suitable plantations or rows of trees but I failed to locate the destination. Later, in the summer, I learned from Mr. G. F. Lane that a large number had roosted in his *Cupressus lawsoniana* hedges, nearly two miles south-west of Clevedon.