

been found inland; in each case the bird was in a weak state after having been blown ashore in a gale. On 15/1/62, H. O. Ingram and J. D. Jepson, standing near the top of Ruapehu saw an adult gannet quite close to them. Although it was flying before a strong east wind, it did not seem in any way distressed. It circled briefly as if trying to find a way round the mountain. Then, flying up above them it soon climbed to about 9000 feet, and disappeared to the south. The nearest rookery, off Kawhia, is over 100 miles away.

Early reports about Gannets trying to start new colonies may be of great importance. Some of the older colonies are getting very crowded and it is likely that some of the sub-adults returning there may have to find new homes. North of the Bay of Islands two new colonies were reported in 1959. One on the Ninepin off Cape Wiwiki was said to have hundreds of nests. I visited it twice in December, 1960. Towards noon on the first visit we found no Gannets within two miles of the stack. A few days later, towards evening, we found a dozen adults roosting; no sign of nests. Again in March, 1961, there were a few roosting birds but no nests.

D. I. McKay of Mangonui reported that there were usually some Gannets on the islet at the end of Berghan Point and up to two hundred at night. In December, 1960, I found about twenty ashore near mid-day and at daybreak the following morning there were 24. There was no sign that they were nesting.

Late one afternoon in January, 1960, we passed "Never Fail," an islet off the Great Mercury. There were no Gannets on or near it. In December, 1960, and again in 1961, Peter Densem found a single nest with adult and chick. There have been previous attempts at establishing colonies in the Mercuries and in the Aldermen. The nearest rookeries to the north are in the Hauraki Gulf, and to the south, at White Island. Early reports of any developments will be much appreciated.

— P. A. S. STEIN

[If you have any contribution to make on any of these four topics will you please write direct to Peter Stein at 9 Cameron Street, AUCKLAND, W.I. — Ed.]

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#### WELCOME SWALLOWS IN NORTHLAND

My wife and I toured in Northland during the first half of February, 1961, and in the course of our tour observed a total of twenty-eight Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) in nine separate localities, as follows: Waioomio, seven; Ngawha, four; Kaitaia, four; Awanui, three;  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile east of Kaingaroa, one; Lake Ngatu, two; Waiharara, two; Kaimaumau, three; Houhora harbour South Head, two. We also visited Herekino, Tokerau and Aurere, where swallows have previously been reported, but drew a blank at these three localities, probably merely because we did not happen to be at the right spot at the right time. After the nesting season is over it must be largely a matter of luck how many birds one sees on a brief visit to any one locality. At Waioomio, Ngawha and Awanui swallows were seen to make extended flights over the surrounding country, periodically returning to base but sometimes only after long intervals of time. On our first visit to Waioomio (1/2/61) we saw seven swallows, but when on

each of three subsequent visits (Feb. 6, March 27 and 29), we stopped by the bridge for about 15 minutes, the tallies were 3, 3 and 5 birds.

I was interested to read (*Notoris IX*, 31) that the Welcome Swallow is now listed as a subspecies of *tahitica*. The resident Malayan swallow is *H. t. abbotti*. Commonest in the lowlands and coastal areas, including mangrove swamps, it is also found on small offshore islands and during the last thirty years has spread to and breeds at hill stations (4000-5500ft. a.s.l.). Usually seen in pairs or small parties, in the lowlands they may congregate into post-breeding flocks of twenty or more, perching on snags or branches of dead trees, from which frequent sallies are made over open country of coastal flats. Favoured nesting sites are the underside of bridges and jetties (wood or concrete) and many nests are made in houses, on top of beams, on rafters and walls and under eaves. Nests have also been found on the faces of steep banks, attached to boulders, and in small rock tunnels. From my observations there seem to be many points of similarity in the behaviour of Malayan and Northland swallows and perhaps in time the local birds may display equal catholicity in choice of nesting sites. The Kaitia birds, between hunting flights over open country and short sessions of perching on telegraph wires were very much interested in a recently built dwelling house just outside the town, and were watched for some time perching on the lintel over the front door, and on the floor of the outside verandah.

Lake Ngatu swallows perched on a post on the edge of the water, till chased off by a gull which took their place. Some of the Waioio birds perched on fence posts and on the top wire of a fence. Awanui birds periodically rested on a stout wire under the bridge. One of the Ngawha birds settled for a time on bare ground on the edge of Lake Tuwhakino.

The "swimming" flight of swallows is characteristic. Much of the time they fly at no great height over farmland and open country, but on extended flights may rise to a considerable elevation. Houhora birds flew low over the rushes and up and down the course of the Motutangi stream near where it flows into the harbour mouth, varying this with wide sweeps over dunes and rough heathland. Kaimaumau birds flew along in front of the low bank behind the beach, fluttering, twittering and momentarily perching on the face of the bank at a small bluff, and then swinging off to fly through the smoke of a small scrub-fire about half a mile away. This habit of flying through smoke to catch insects disturbed by the fire is one which is shared with the Malayan bird. Ngawha birds skimmed low over the lake, occasionally dipping to the surface of the water. At Waioio and Awanui periodical swift swoops under the bridges alternated with social circling, hunting flights low over the water or wide ranging flights over the paddocks.

Only two of the birds seen had fully elongated tail streamers. The white subterminal spots on all but the central and outer pairs of tail feathers are visible when the bird spreads its tail in the process of banking or settling on a perch. One bird, apparently young, had very pale chestnut on forehead and throat, and in the ruffled plumage of its back whitish feather bases showed through the blue, giving a somewhat mottled appearance.

— A. T. EDGAR