

of disturbance caused a marked decrease in numbers of penguins using the landing site.

The main breeding ground of Hooker's sealions is at the Auckland Islands (460 km south of New Zealand), but individuals range south-west to Macquarie Island. During the late 1940s and early 1950s it was reported that sealions, particularly one individual, were killing and eating large numbers of Gentoo Penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*) on Macquarie Island, presumably because their normal food was not available there (Gwynn 1953, Csordas 1963). Rare instances of predation of Yellow-eyed Penguins by Hooker's sealions have also been observed on the Auckland Islands, both on land and at sea (M Cawthorn, pers. comm.). At Sandy Bay, Enderby Island, where large numbers of sealions gather during the breeding season, penguins sometimes have to pass between sealions which are lying only a few metres apart on the beach (PM, pers. obs.). Observations at Campbell and Auckland Islands suggest that predation levels are generally low, but that some individual sealions may learn this predatory behaviour.

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#### Shearwaters and Saddleback as prey at a Morepork ground nest

A Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) nest was observed at close range during a field expedition to Red Mercury Island 26.11.91 - 3.12.91. The nest was on the ground in the shelter of a rock and consisted of a shallow depression with no nesting material. Similar ground nests have been recorded previously on Red Mercury (R. B. Sibson, pers. comm.) and on Stanley Island in a petrel burrow (T.G. Lovegrove, pers. comm.) and under the roots of a pohutukawa (P. Thompson, pers. comm.), which may indicate a lack of mature forest with tree holes. Ground nests have also been reported in the Mackenzie Country (Imboden 1985).

On the first day two downy white chicks with unopened eyes were present. Remains of prey at the nest included an adult and juvenile kiore (*Rattus exulans*) and a Saddleback (*Philesturnus carunculatus*), all characteristically beheaded. On the third day one chick was dead, and within a day it was gone from the nest. Before our departure the nest was again inspected and prey consisted of two beheaded Allied Shearwaters (*Puffinus assimilis*). On each occasion an adult bird presided at the nest, with the mate often in attendance closely.

It is noteworthy that *Puffinus assimilis* has not been recorded before as Morepork prey, as it is large relative to the size of the Morepork (mean body weight 219 g cf. Morepork 174 g, Marchant & Higgins 1990). It is possible the shearwaters were fledging young (R.B. Sibson, pers. comm.).

Most previous studies of Morepork diet have concluded that insects form the main component with bird prey infrequent and restricted to the smaller passerines (Cunningham 1948, Edgar 1962, Imboden 1975, Lindsay & Ordish 1964, Saint Girons *et al.* 1986).

Evidence of Saddleback predation is also largely circumstantial (Lovegrove 1991, Saddleback transfers from Stanley Island to Kapiti Island, Dept. of Conservation Science & Research internal report no. 98). An exception is an instance on Hen Island where a Morepork was described taking a Saddleback near an aviary (Wilkinson 1927).

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#### Sightings of White Heron at Suva

On a recent visit to Suva I was delighted to see and photograph a White Heron (Large Egret) *Egretta alba*. A Reef Heron (white phase) *Egretta sacra* obligingly stood alongside for comparison. *Egretta alba* is not listed in the "Checklist of Birds Recorded in the Fiji Region" included in Dick Watling's book. Jim Moore, OSNZ recorder for the South West Pacific, confirms that he has been unable to find another record of this species in Fiji. As white phase Reef Herons are common in Fiji, it is possible that the larger White Heron could fail to attract attention.