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SHORT NOTE

Spotted shags breeding on Kapiti Island

COLIN MISKELLY

Wellington Conservancy, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 5086, Wellington.

On 16 October 1999, a small nesting colony of spotted shags *Stictocarbo punctatus* was found on the northeastern coast of Kapiti Island. Spotted shags regularly roost on a rock face midway between the mouths of Te Rere and Te Kahuoterangi Streams, e.g. I saw 19 there on 19 February 1997. I became aware that shags could be nesting at this site when I saw a flying shag carrying nest material towards the rock face. A scramble down from the public track revealed a group of 20 spotted shags, including 2 immatures, centred on 10 nests in a cleft in the cliff. All the adults were in prenuptial plumage, and it was evident that laying had only recently commenced. Contents of 6 nests could be seen, of which 3 were empty, 2 had single fresh eggs and 1 nest contained 2 fresh eggs. The modal clutch size for spotted shags is 3 (mean 2.7), laid between late August and November (mean 13-17 October) on the Otago coast and at Banks Peninsula (Marchant & Higgins 1990). The presence of

immature shags and a heavily stained old egg lying between 2 nests suggested that shags had bred at this site during at least 1 previous season.

On 22 January 2000 all 7 discernible nests were vacated, but 7 adult and 11 juvenile spotted shags were roosting nearby.

This is the first record that I have found of spotted shags breeding on Kapiti Island, and it is the second known colony in the southern North Island after Matiu/Somes Island in Wellington Harbour.

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