

# New Zealand Bird Notes

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## WINTER DIVING OF GANNETS.

By W. J. PHILLIPPS, Dominion Museum, Wellington.

In the N.Z. Journal of Science and Technology, vol. 7, p. 191, 1924, I supplied a small article on sardines or pilchards in Wellington Harbour. After recording the species as common at the wharves, I mentioned how on entering the harbour the pilchards (*Sardinops neopilchardus*) seemed to divide up into several shoals as could be determined by the movements of sea birds. Large numbers of gannets (*Morus serrator*) were to be seen diving with their accustomed rapidity and these together with several species of shags were for a few days at the end of July, 1924, very common in the harbour.

Again, in 1929, I had occasion to refer to this winter diving of the gannets to take pilchards (N.Z. Journ. Sci. and Tech., vol. 10, p. 343). In this article I mentioned the men stationed as gannet watchers on certain high points around Queen Charlotte Sound. From about 1860 until the early years of the present century, large numbers of pilchards were taken each winter from this Sound, the fish being locally known as Picton herring. The presence of shags was not a sure indication that pilchards were congregating; but gannets invariably collected and commenced diving when shoals became large. Gannets did not disturb the shoals to the same extent as did large fishes and porpoises. Pilchards were taken in the Sound by a net 14 fathoms deep and 96 fathoms long. These fish have a habit of lying packed in a silvery mass on the bottom and rising to the surface for food. The gannet watchers took up their stations in May and remained as required until August.