

INTRODUCED BIRDS.

It is worth making brief reference to the introduced birds noted, as it is certain that all these got there under their own steam.

Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) were fairly plentiful, though, owing to their extreme shyness, they were not often seen. They nested chiefly in big bushes of black fern, the usual clutch of eggs being four, one c. 5 was noted. Many nests were upset by fern fronds growing up under them. Nests were also found in dead stumps and forks of olearia. So shy were the birds that I only once saw one on its nest, and a nest of eggs near our camp was forsaken immediately on our arrival. Several times when in the bush I saw a blackbird flying towards me. When it saw me it would sheer off with a cry of alarm and fly well out of sight. I saw no young flying birds of the year.

Song Thrush (*T. ericetorum*).—Not so plentiful as the blackbird, and not so wild, the thrush was still much shyer here than on the mainland. Nests were found with eggs (clutch four to five) but none with young. All found may have been second clutches (though no flying youngsters were seen), or the nesting season is much later than on the mainland. There are no berry-bearing plants on Snares, so thrushes and blackbirds must live entirely on animal food throughout the year.

Hedge Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*).—Only one seen. It is on all the islands off the south-west coast of Stewart Island.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Seen on several occasions flying over the camp.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).—A nest from which young had recently flown, was found in the roof of the depot. The birds were occasionally seen, a flock of ten being once noted. They were wild and did not come near our camp for scraps, which could be taken as a good indication that none of the birds seen was actually a mainland emigrant.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*).—A few seen and heard singing.

Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret*).—A few seen.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*).—Some seen; rather more seen than redpolls.

BLUE SHAG OF STEWART ISLAND.

On November 24 the "Alert" took a cruise around the entrances to Port Pegasus.

On the west side of the middle entrance was a colony of blue shags (*Stictocarbo punctatus steadi*) nesting in well sheltered clefts on a cliff some 150 feet high, the fourteen nests being about 75 feet above the sea. A little further on, on a rocky islet, were two nests about 25 feet above sea level; but excepting these two, all the other nests that we saw (a total of 40 or 50) were high up on cliffs, and would only have been accessible by rope from above, and even then most of them would have been very difficult to reach because the ledges on which they were placed were so much overhung.

Some birds were sitting but a great many were building, flying to grassy ledges at the top of the cliffs and returning with large billsful of grass and vegetation. I saw only one bird carrying seaweed to its nest, but as we were unable to examine any nests closely, I cannot say to what extent seaweed was used in their construction. The birds do not place their nests as close together as does the ordinary spotted shag (*S. p. punctatus*) although in many cases the ledges were very suitable for crowded colonies of nests. In this respect according to C. A. Fleming, the bird resembles the Chatham Islands spotted shag.

In Port Pegasus we constantly saw these birds flying about in pairs or in parties of up to 12 birds. It has been said frequently that the blue shag was almost exterminated by the whalers in the early days, and it is only now recovering. I very much doubt this, for in the 15 years that I have known the bird, its numerical status has remained practically

unchanged, and during that period it has certainly not been shot or interfered with to any extent that would have reduced its numbers.

I personally believe that the bird has never been plentiful and that its present numbers which, indeed, are remarkably small, probably represent its status for the past century or more.

It is worth noting that its methods of nesting are such that it would be extremely difficult for whalers or sealers to get any considerable number of birds excepting by shooting individuals, and this they would certainly not have done. If, as is indeed probable, the whalers and sealers used any considerable number of shags for food, it is much more likely that they used the common Stewart Island shag (*Phalacrocorax huttoni*) which could be quite easily obtained and in much greater numbers than the blue shag.

Whilst guesses at total bird populations are often wide of the mark, I would say that the total number of blue shags at present is in the vicinity of 500-1000 birds.

The Society is deeply indebted to Mr. Stead for his generosity in donating the cost of publication of this number of the Bulletin.