

No. 2.

NOTES ON THE OOLOGY OF LORD HOWE ISLAND.

BY

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OUR knowledge of the nesting and eggs of the Lord Howe Island birds is very limited, and until an excursion, fitted out by the Trustees of the Australian Museum, in September, 1887, very little had been done towards recording authentic information relative to the breeding season, or the eggs of the birds found there. Of the sixty species recorded in Dr. Ramsay's "List of birds found in Lord Howe Island," only eleven are strictly peculiar, and of only one of these is the nest and eggs known; much remains therefore to be done, and it is to be hoped that any one favourably situated for acquiring further information, will not fail to make notes on this interesting subject.

HALCYON VAGANS, *Lesson.*

Mr. E. H. Saunders, who has lately returned from Lord Howe Island, states that he found this bird breeding freely during the month of November, 1887, in the hollow limbs of trees. The eggs, five in number, for a sitting, are rounded in form, and of a beautiful pearly-white tint. The dimensions of a set are as follows:—Length, (A) 1·14 x 0·92 inch (this specimen is somewhat sharply pointed at one end; (B) 1·08 x 0·91 inch; (C) 1·12 x 0·91 inch; (D) 1·1 x 0·9 inch; (E) 1·08 x 0·92 inch.

APLONIS FUSCUS, *Gould.*

According to Mr. Saunders, the nidification of this bird is entirely different from that of the allied genus *Calornis*, of the Australian continent, resorting to the hollow branches of trees to construct their nests; several were found with young birds, but only one containing eggs. In every instance these nests were built of dried grasses, and placed in a hollow at the end of a branch. Eggs, four in number, for a sitting, varying somewhat in form even in the same set; two eggs of this set are swollen ovals, being thickest at the centre, and slightly pointed towards each end, the other two are long ovals, slightly tapering at one end only; in colour they are of a pale bluish green, freckled with markings of a reddish and wood-brown tint, equally disposed over the surface of the shell, some of the markings are very indistinct. Length, (A) 1·97 x 0·78 inch; (B) 1·06 x 0·77 inch (thick ovals; (C) 1·14 x 0·76 inch; (D) 1·12 x 0·75 inch.

CHALCOPHAPS CHRYSOCHLORA, *Wagler.*

The nest of this bird is composed of a few thin twigs placed crosswise on the horizontal branch of a tree, not far from the ground. The eggs are two in number, oval in form, of a light creamy-white colour, and give the average measurement of 1·47 inch x 0·8 inch.

This bird, previously plentiful upon the island, has already become very scarce and will probably soon be exterminated with other species by the Islanders.

STERNA FULIGINOSA, *Gmelin*.

This bird was found breeding on the rocky ledges and flat parts of the cliffs, but more often on the bare sand; little or no attempt was made at forming a nest, except in a few instances where a little debris was found scraped around the single egg laid by this bird for sitting. Mr. Saunders, who visited the island during the breeding season, collected a large number of the eggs during November. In a series of over one hundred eggs examined, there is a great variation in the size, colour, and disposition of their markings. The predominant form is oval, tapering slightly towards the thin end, the colour a dull white, some being nearly devoid of markings, others uniformly freckled and spotted over the whole surface of the shell with reddish-brown markings, others have large irregularly-shaped confluent blotches of purplish-red and slaty-grey, the latter appearing as if beneath the shell, these markings predominating in some towards the larger end of the egg, and a number have rounded spots of rich-red evenly distributed over the surface of the shell. In comparatively few instances do the markings assume the form of a zone.

Length, (A) 2·13 inches x 1·42 inch.

(B) 2 ,, x 1·45 ,,

(C) 1·85 ,, x 1·4 ,,

(D) 2·15 ,, x 1·45 ,,

(E) 2·11 ,, x 1·4 ,,

(F) 2·04 ,, x 1·34 ,,

(G) 2·02 ,, x 1·47 ,,

(H) 2·14 ,, x 1·48 ,,

ANOUS STOLIDUS, *Linnaeus*.

This bird was found breeding during October and November. Its single egg is deposited on a nearly flat nest of sticks, twigs, and seaweed, placed upon low bushes. The eggs, usually oval in form, are slightly pointed at one end, and vary in colour from white to creamy-white, some being minutely spotted all over with brownish-black, others being largely blotched, more particularly towards the larger end, with blood-red markings, and nearly obsolete spots of the same colour appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell. Two average specimens measure as follows:—Length, (A) 2·03 inches x 1·45 inch; (B) 2·18 inches x 1·47 inch.

ANOUS CINEREUS, *Gould*.

This species was found breeding in the early part of September, also during the month of November. The eggs were rather difficult to obtain. For the purposes of breeding this bird usually resorts to almost inaccessible ledges of rocks, but sometimes deposits a single egg on the bare sand. In form the eggs are nearly true ovals, being but slightly tapered at one end, of a dull creamy white ground some colour, being sparingly freckled and spotted with faint reddish-brown and slaty-grey markings, the latter colour predominating in some instances, and appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; others have short, thick, wavy markings, resembling ill-shapen letters and figures,

equally distributed over the surface of the shell, which although not thickly disposed, yet, are in some places confluent, and more indistinct than usually found on other Terns eggs. There is very little variation in their size and shape, two average specimens measure as follows:—Length, (A) 1·63 x 1·16 inch; (B) 1·67 x 1·2 inch.

PUFFINUS SPHENURUS, Gould.

During the months of November and December, this bird was found breeding in great numbers, and like most of the *Procellariidæ*, they dig a long tunnel or burrow in the sand or the soft earth, many of these burrows are several feet in length, and a single egg is deposited at the extremity, which when fresh, is snow-white, but soon becomes stained and soiled. There is great variation in the shape and size, true ovals, lengthened and swollen ovals predominating, some terminating abruptly at one end, others being sharply pointed.

Length, (A) 2·35 inches x 1·67 inch.
 (B) 2·45 „ x 1·6 „
 (C) 2·45 „ x 1·68 „
 (D) 2·57 „ x 1·64 „

NECTRIS BREVICAUDUS, Brandt.

This bird was likewise found breeding in great numbers, during the months of November and December. The mode of nidification is so precisely similar to that of the preceding species, that a separate description is not necessary. Like all Petrel's eggs they have a peculiar musky odour, which they always retain, even when emptied of their contents and kept for many years. Only one egg is laid for a sitting. Six specimens measure as follows:—

(A) 2·63 inches x 1·78 inch.
 (B) 2·8 „ x 1·73 „
 (C) 2·78 „ x 1·8 „
 (D) 2·65 „ x 1·81 „
 (E) 2·82 „ x 1·72 „
 (F) 2·87 „ x 1·81 „

PHAETON RUBRICAUDA, Bodd.

This bird is found breeding during November and December, its single egg is laid under the shelter of projecting ledges, of almost inaccessible rocks, on the face of cliffs, and are consequently very difficult to procure. The eggs are oval in form, being thickest at the centre, and tapering slightly at one end, of a dull reddish-brown colour, which is nearly obscured by minute freckles and spots of purplish-brown and grey, in some instances they are blotched and smeared, not unfrequently on the smaller end. Two specimens obtained are nearly white, and entirely devoid of markings.

Length, (A) 2·6 inches x 1·85 inch.
 (B) 2·65 „ x 1·9 „
 (C) 2·78 „ x 1·95 „

SULA CYANOPS, *Sundevall*.

The Masked Gannet was found breeding from September to December; little or no attempt is made at forming a nest, the eggs, two in number, usually being deposited on the bare ground, when nearly laid, they are of a pale greenish-white colour, which in most instances is covered with a thick coating of lime; after being sat upon for a few days, the eggs become soiled and assume a dirty brown hue. In form they vary from short to long ovals.

Length, (A)	2.47	inches	x	1.84	inch.
(B)	2.62	„	x	1.78	„
(C)	2.47	„	x	1.9	„
(D)	3.65	„	x	1.81	„
(E)	2.6	„	x	1.87	„
(F)	2.57	„	x	1.9	„

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North, Alfred J. 1889. "Notes on the oology of Lord Howe Island." *The Australian Museum Memoir* 2, 43–48.

<https://doi.org/10.3853/j.0067-1967.2.1889.480>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/114388>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3853/j.0067-1967.2.1889.480>

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