

Notes on Some Birds of the Abrolhos Islands (W.A.)

BY CHAS. G. GIBSON, PERTH.

THE following few brief notes on some birds found breeding on the Abrolhos Islands, W.A., may prove of interest.

The notes were made during a short trip to the Islands between the 9th and 19th of November last. The trip was to a certain extent marred by bad weather, mild southerly gales being experienced during the whole of the time, and these prevented us from getting about the islands as we had wished. Some notes on this trip by Mr. A. W. Milligan have appeared in *The West Australian* newspaper.

The Islands consist in the main of three groups—Pelsart, Easter, and Wallabi—these being separated by 10 or 12 miles of open water. Pelsart Group is the most southerly, and Wallabi the northern. The following islands were visited, viz.:—Pelsart (Pelsart Group), Wooded Island, Rat Island (Easter Group), East Wallabi and Pigeon Islands (Wallabi Group).

The following is a list of the birds noted breeding on the various islands:—

White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) had almost finished breeding. About eight nests were noted, several with two large young almost able to fly, and others that the young birds had apparently just left. Nests built as a rule on the rocky promontories, and close to the water. Noted only on the Wallabis.

Osprey (*Pandion leucocephalus*) had almost finished breeding. Nests noted on almost every island, and containing young in all stages, from just hatched to almost able to fly. Several nests also noted that the young had just left. No nests with eggs were seen. Nests built on the coral heaps anywhere on the islands.

Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*).—These birds were not personally noted breeding, but I was informed (on reliable authority) that there was a small colony of them breeding on the west end of West Wallabi Island, in company with the Pied Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax hypoleucus*). My informant told me that the Pelicans did not build their own nests, but simply took possession of suitable ones of Cormorants and laid two eggs therein. On our return to Geraldton I was presented with a pair of eggs taken from this rookery in October, 1907. There were said to be eight to a dozen pairs breeding.

Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax hypoleucus*).—A small colony of these was noted breeding on Lagoon Island (Wallabi Group). We were unable to land on this island, however, and so could not note the contents of the nests, but the birds appeared to be sitting on eggs or small young. There was also said to be a large colony breeding on West Wallabi.

Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*).—These had practically finished breeding. Several pairs of old birds were noted with their young (two) "at heel." They were not plentiful.

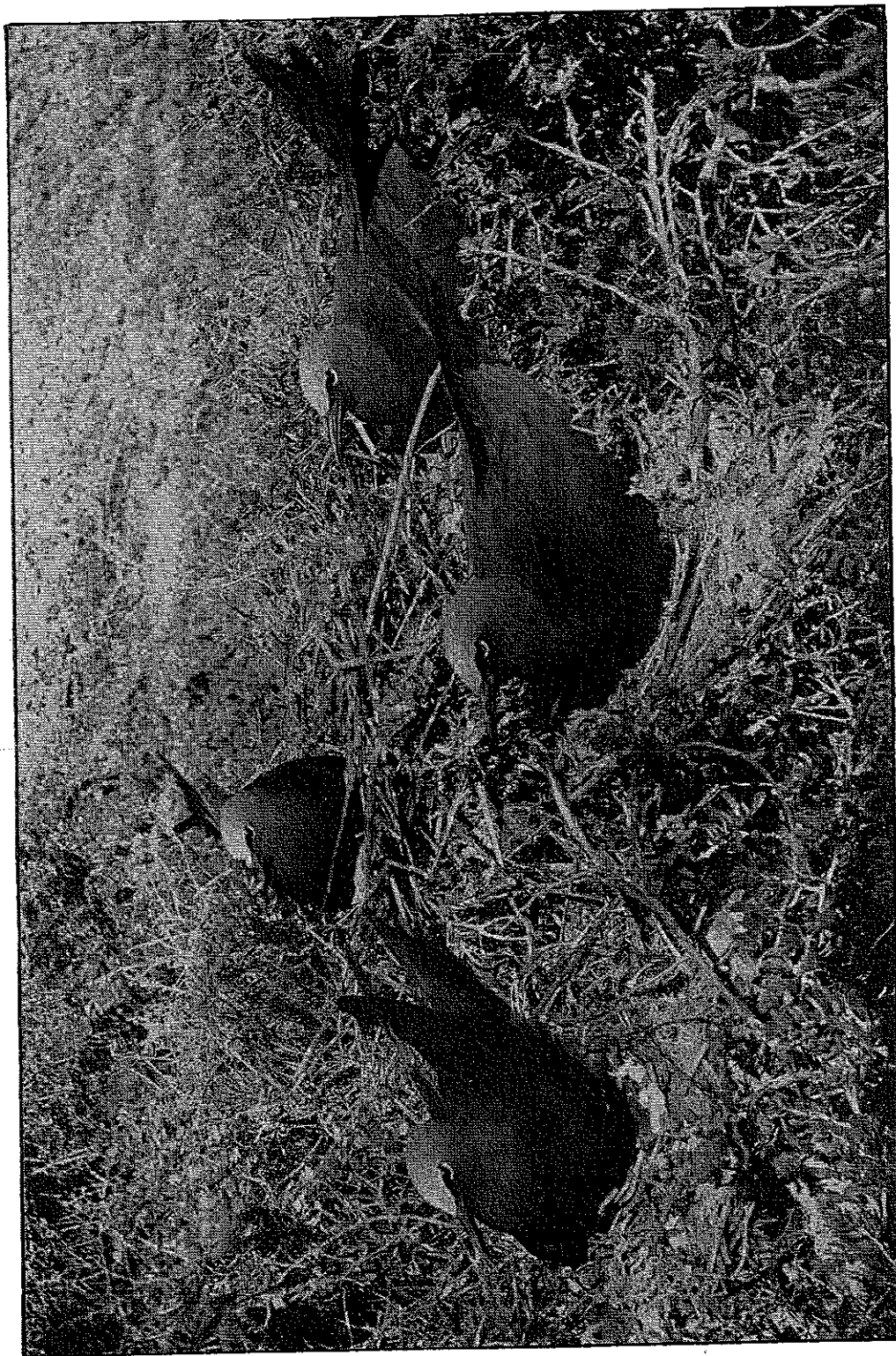
Silver Gull (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*).—Only one small colony was

PLATE VII.



Noddies Nesting, Pelsart Island, Abrolhos.

FROM A PHOTO. BY O. P. CONIGRAVE,



Group of nesting Noddies, Rat Island, Abrolhos.

FROM A PHOTO. BY C. G. GIBSON.

noted breeding, but young birds were common; breeding was apparently almost over. The nests noted (on Rat Island, Easter Group) contained eggs or young birds.

Allied Petrel (*Puffinus assimilis*).—Noted on several of the islands, principally on Wooded Island; had practically finished breeding, as numerous almost full-grown young were found in the burrows, but no eggs or small young.

Wedge-tailed Petrel (*Puffinus chlororhynchus*).—Principal colonies were on Pelsart, Rat, and West Wallabi Islands. On Rat Island freshly cleaned-out burrows were noted on 12th November, but no eggs; on 19th November this island was again visited, and almost every burrow contained a fresh egg. Eggs were also first noted on Pelsart Island about this date. Large colonies on each of the above islands.

Red-capped Dottrel (*Ægialitis ruficapilla*).—Fairly common; had finished breeding; numerous young birds noted.

Tropic-Birds (*Phaeton*).—Both the Red-tailed and the White-tailed Tropic-Birds have been recorded as seen on these islands, but we did not note any. The fisherman state that it is several years since any have been seen. They used to frequent the Wallabi Group principally.

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*).—Only a few pairs were noted. Breeding was apparently over, as most of the old birds had young (two) "at heel."

Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*).—Noted principally on Pelsart and Wooded Islands; were in large numbers, but apparently had not started to breed.

Roseate Tern (*Sterna gracilis*).—Noted principally on Pelsart Island, where there was a large colony of them; had not started to lay in November, but I was informed afterwards that they bred in large numbers on Pelsart Island early in December.*

White-faced Ternlet (*Sterna nereis*).—Fairly common, principally on Pelsart Island, where a large colony was just commencing to lay on 10th November, several fresh eggs being taken on that date.

Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuliginosa*).—The principal colonies were on Pelsart Island and Rat Island. Hundreds of thousands were in full laying season on Pelsart on 10th November, but the principal breeding island was Rat Island. Here the birds were breeding in countless numbers, laying being in full swing on 14th November. Only one nest was recorded containing more than one egg, it containing a pair.

Noddy Tern (*Anous stolidus*).—Also breeding, principally on Pelsart and Rat Islands, especially the latter, where they were laying in hundreds of thousands, in company with the "Sooties." Nesting was in full swing on 14th November on the latter island, most nests containing eggs—or, rather, an egg—as only one nest was noted with two eggs.

* See also "Nests and Eggs" (Campbell), p. 835.

PLATE IX.



Lesser Noddies Nesting in Mangroves, Wooded Island, Abrolhos.

FROM A PHOTO. BY C. P. CONIGRAVE.

Lesser Noddy Tern (*Micranous tenuirostris*).—Only one colony was noted, that being on Wooded Island. Here, again, hundreds of thousands of birds were breeding in a mangrove thicket. Each nest contained a single egg or a small young one. Most of the eggs were heavily incubated, laying evidently having commenced a couple of weeks previously (to 12th November). The "Ternery" reported by A. J. Campbell in "Nests and Eggs," p. 856, and visited by him, on Pelsart Island, has been abandoned for several years past, the birds having all left for Wooded Island.

Panayan Tern (*Sterna anæsthes*).—A few of these Terns were noted on Pelsart Island, breeding in the open, in company with the "Sooties."

Green-backed Silver-eye (*Zosterops gouldi*).—Common on all the larger islands; had apparently finished breeding.

Spotted Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis maculata*).—Very common on East Wallabi (the largest island of the group); possibly also on West Wallabi. Not noted elsewhere. Had apparently finished breeding.

Brush Bronze-wing (*Phaps elegans*).—Noted only on East Wallabi; possibly also on West Wallabi. Very plentiful. Breeding apparently over.

Spotless Crake (*Porzana tabuensis*).—Only one pair of these birds was noted, these being seen on a rocky islet forming part of Rat Island. This record for these birds is, I think, somewhat unique.

Painted Quail (*Turnix varia*).—These birds were noted in large numbers on the Wallabis only. They had apparently finished breeding, as numerous young birds were noted, but no nests or eggs.

Oyster-catchers (*Hæmatopus longirostris* and *H. unicolor*).—Both these birds were observed along the beaches on most of the islands, usually in companies of three to seven. Both species were seen together. They did not appear to have commenced breeding.

Reef-Heron (*Demigretta sacra*).—Odd birds of this species were noted, chiefly on the Wallabi Group. They did not appear to be breeding.

The list does not profess to be a complete one of all the birds breeding on these islands, especially with regard to the Petrels. Waders of different kinds were common on all the beaches, but it was regretted that no special attention could be paid to them.

Birds at Essendon.

BY H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., MOONEE PONDS, VICT.

THIS district, with its hills and dales, its river frontage and pond life, its belts of evergreen trees and numerous shrubberies, is the home of, or is visited by, many interesting birds, although so near the heart of the great city. Some, such as the Heron and Dottrel, may be seen once or twice, then depart to other feeding-grounds; others, like the Reed-Warbler, come down from the