

PARENGARENGA, FROM WHICH GODWITS MIGRATE

The Harbour Should be a Sanctuary

(By E. T. Frost.)

PARENGARENGA HARBOUR, which opens out into the sea about ten miles south of the North Cape, is a most interesting sheet of water to the naturalist, abounding as it does in bird and fish life.

The waters are beautifully clear, and for the most part the beaches and tidal flats are clean, and at low water can be ridden over on horse-back. The water is delightfully warm, especially on a calm summer's day, as the tide makes over the flats that have been exposed to the sun.

The littoral on the south side of the harbour entrance is composed almost entirely of pure white sand which glistens like a snowfield. Here is obtained the thousands of tons of sand used in a year for making glass.

TAME WADERS.

Bird life is most interesting. Naturally, the waders are plentiful, as they can find abundance of feed, such as small shellfish and crustaceans. They become very tame if not molested. Right through the past autumn and winter, until the nesting period, blue herons and pied stilts were numerous. One heron and a pair of stilts seemed to pan out a section of beach in front of the writer's house and became very tame.

The heron would land on the launch and punt moored at the wharf and walk about quite unconcernedly. The stilts could be approached within ten yards.

It was a lesson in patience to see the heron fishing. Standing motionless, it awaited the unwary small fish, which it picked up with a very quick thrust of its sharp bill.

As the tide makes over the flat, a couple of caspian tern follow up, and are continuously pouncing on the unwary fish, right up to high-water mark.

CUNNING RED-BILLED GULLS.

The receding tide leaves shallow pools where the sagacity of the beautiful red-billed gull in obtaining a meal can be observed. Standing in a film of water, one quarter to half an inch

deep, it starts to dance, working its little feet at an amazing speed, all the time gradually moving backwards.

The pounding of the little feet evidently disturb the marine worms which lie just beneath the surface, causing them to disclose their position, for every now and then the bird picks up a morsel and then continues its dance.

IDEAL PLACE FOR GODWITS.

Of course, the godwits make the principal interest of the harbour. Thousands of them fly up and down, following the rising and falling of the tide to feed on the flats. Mingled with them occasionally are other migrants such as knots and sandpipers. The godwits start on their return journey to Siberia about March. Last year, on 10th March, large flocks were to be seen taking off and flying in a northerly direction over the high hills at North Cape. Six months later, to the exact date, the writer noticed several large flights drop into the harbour over the ranges.

What a harbour for a sanctuary! What an everlasting monument for a Minister of the Crown to make in assuring a place of safety for these famous migrants, that are so sadly persecuted, now that travel is made so easy for shooters by good motor-roads. It is absolutely necessary that these birds should have some sanctuaries if they are to be saved from extinction. This most northerly harbour offers a splendid opportunity for an act of justice which should have been done long ago.

VANISHED FORESTS.

With the exception of a few small areas left in gullies, the whole of the country around the harbour is devoid of forest, but at one time it must have carried magnificent kauri forests, as the deposits of kauri gum have been enormous. This forest was destroyed in prehistoric times when this part of the island was of much greater area.

As usual the hand of man has completed the destruction until at present even firewood is