

*Notornis* 29: 262-292, published in 1982.)

The University of Canterbury team has followed up the earlier studies of the expedition of 1947, when Sir Charles Fleming, Robert Falla, R. C. Murphy (head of the Natural History Museum of New York and a world authority on sea birds), and Robert Wilson made the original observations which properly identified the four unique bird species. The story of this expedition is attractively written up by Wilson in his book *Bird Islands of New Zealand*, which everyone interested in our remote island reserves should read.

That book reveals that the Snares boat harbour is far from safe in the frequently wild weather the party encountered:

"Our approach was delayed by 2 days' bad weather . . . when at least we entered the harbour our propeller grazed a rock . . . there was a decided swell . . . the *Alert* was moored with lines fore and aft." However, "several of the ropes parted. It had been proposed that the party should sleep aboard, but the weather got worse with waves rolling in [on the rising tide]". The party was hastily put ashore, and with difficulty the *Alert* had to put to sea. "Had the *Alert* not gone out that evening, it seems almost certain she would have been wrecked, and as daylight was necessary to negotiate the narrow entrance, it would have been difficult to leave during the night."

For 5 days the party had to endure rain and wind in their tents ashore, which were also rained on by thousands of sooty shearwaters at night, even to invading the tents. These muttonbirds are so numerous that they are short of underground accommodation. Ornithologists should note that the younger first-

breeder muttonbirds stand little chance of winning a desirable tunnel, for which reason thousands lay their eggs in the open.

### Unsuitable for mooring

It is clear that the boat haven at the Snares is dangerous and unsafe entirely with an on-shore wind. Then, with moorings parting, a boat must get out into the open sea and (if it is able) lie in the lee of the cliffs or steam the long, rough passage home. But it is this lack of safe boat refuge which has helped to preserve the island's unmodified fauna and flora. Of the many islets within the New Zealand 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone only the harbourless small islands, unmodified by human settlement, are rat-free sanctuaries, for example, the Antipodes and the Bounty Islands and several small islands off Stewart Island; in the north several small islands in Cook Strait and the Hauraki Gulf.

To allow any one of these priceless international treasures to be at risk for permanent degradation by introduced mammalian predators is really monstrous.

### Interference by foreign vessels

In the Department of Lands and Survey Press release it was stated that "discussions have disclosed that it is more probable that any danger to the wildlife on the Snares is likely to come from the larger vessels sheltering off shore while they are fishing in New Zealand's territorial waters". The Department would be reminding joint-venture fishing vessels of their obligations and asking that they remain at least 1 mile off shore.

This is very necessary; but one cannot enforce such a provision without policing the coast with fishery protection

craft. However, if it were internationally known that the Snares are off-limits to all fishing craft, that would help to persuade foreign fishermen to respect the ruling. Though these large ocean-going fishing vessels are unable to enter the small Snares harbour, their dinghies or plyboats are likely to put ashore when such a vessel is anchored or idle near any coast. This is especially so on remote, unwatched islands, where the crew can raid sea bird and seal colonies for fresh "tucker" (a nice change from processed galley food).

It may also not be known that bird and seal flesh is regarded by fishermen as "sure-catch" bait for lobsters and crabs. For a grievous example, Bass Strait fishermen of Australia constantly raid, and have almost exterminated, the gannets breeding on small islets there.

I write from experience: I was for 10 years a crayfish and lobster fisherman living on a small island off the coast of Wales. I was appointed an honorary fishery protection officer to assist (in my strategic position) the United Kingdom Ministry of Fisheries in intercepting and occasionally arresting French fishermen who were illegally poaching at night, setting their craypots within the 3-mile limit and raiding the sea bird islets for the abundant gannets, puffins, shearwaters, and other edible birds, as well as rabbits and an occasional sheep.

If no New Zealand fishermen are permitted to moor at the Snares, there may well be less chance of foreign crews calling in there while their vessels are anchored near.

The only reason fishermen have been granted permits to moor at the Snares is purely commercial. They have overfished the Stewart Island, Foveaux Strait, and Fiordland