

(continued from previous page)

says, what a pity that this lonely waif, which had associated itself with its nearest counterpart in the North Atlantic, was not studied at close range by an ornithologist who could record all its reactions to life in different surroundings and company.

Heavy Mortality

Mention was made in the preceding article on mollymawks of the heavy casualties the birds can suffer through failure of their normal food supply and for other reasons. Other factors which have affected the breeding of these birds in the sub-antarctic, include the various animals introduced by man to provide sustenance for castaways. On the Campbells, the wild sheep who have descended from those left when the sheep-run was given up in 1927 are attracted to the mollymawk colonies by the lush growth of native grasses and other plants. Feeding right to the edges of the nests, they cause the chicks to over-balance and fall out, either to the muddy walks or even over ledges to other parts of the colony. The majority of them perish miserably for they are unable to regain their nest and are seemingly not found by their parents. Many were rescued by the coast-watchers on the Campbells but, as these visits were rare, not much could be done except to shoot off a few of the sheep.

On the Auckland Islands the position is even worse, for large and always hungry wild pigs get amongst the colonies of the shy mollymawk at the Western Entrance to Carnley Harbour. They cause tremendous losses to the birds in eggs and young chicks. The destruction of the wild pigs is the only remedy but, as the colony is situated in a remote locality and seldom visited, little good can be done. The shy mollymawks at this place are now confined to steep and inaccessible faces on exposed cliffs which pigs cannot reach. Fortunately Disappointment Island, in the Auckland group, is also a breeding ground for this and another species.

Peculiar Colony

At North Cape on Campbell Island there is a colony situated in a strange position. Composed entirely of black-browed mollymawks, it is seemingly an overflow from the densely populated ledges on the cliffs below. On a small flat at the top of the 800-foot cliffs there is a small tarn and on a low bar and on the large stones in this shallow pond the birds have built their nests. Birds coming in to relieve their mates have to paddle through water and to stand in it alongside the nests. All mud and straw for nest-building has to be carried some distance. The snowy plumage of the birds reflected in the muddy water gives this colony a peculiar appearance, and I have never seen another colony like it among all those I have visited.

Mollymawk eggs are quite large, much larger than a duck's egg. Only one egg is laid and it is white with a zone of reddish brown spots or blotches at the larger end. On some of the islands off South America the eggs are regularly taken to supplement the diet of sealers and others living in those regions. They are esteemed good eating. Fortunately for the mollymawks on the Auckland

and Campbell Islands, the food supply of the men stationed there was adequate and none needed to be taken. The distance of the colonies from the camps, too, helped!

The main article in the diet of the mollymawks is squid or cuttle and this mollusc must be present in sub-antarctic waters in vast numbers to supply the wants of the millions of sea-birds and of the huge seals which prey upon it. Strangely enough, few are seen in the waters about the islands, but alongside mollymawk and albatross nests one finds large heaps of the indigestible horny beaks of the squid which the birds have ejected.

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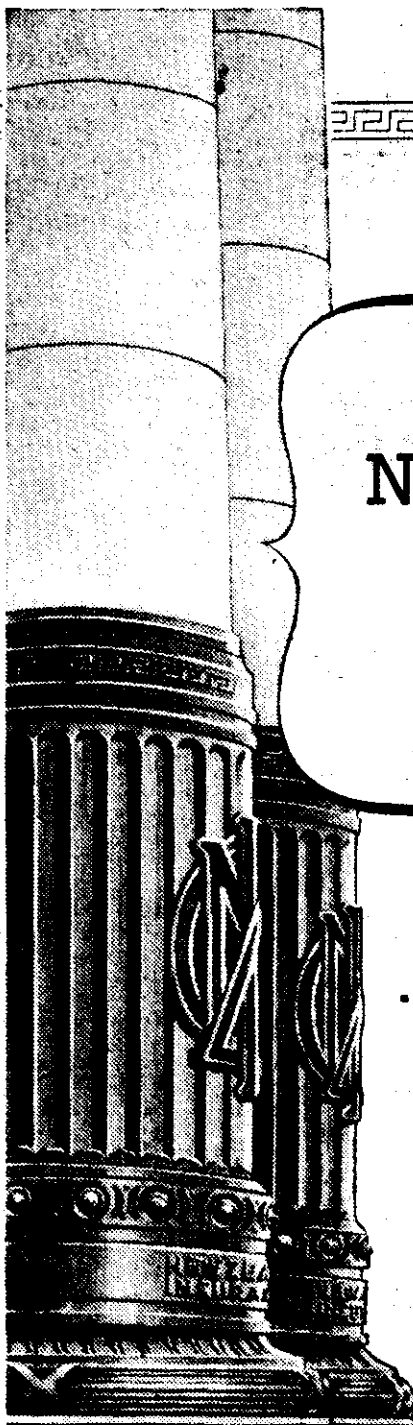
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