

*BRUMMITT—The Baudin Rocks.*

## The Baudin Rocks.

By D. W. Brummitt.

The islands and rocks, usually known as the Baudin Rocks, lie in Guichen Bay, about two miles distant from the north-west end of the Bay and about six miles from Robe. Several isolated rocks and two islands constitute the group. I have never visited any of the rocks, but I have been on the islands each January for the last five years. The islands consist of consolidated calcareous sand and loose sand, and are surrounded by flat reefs at about low-water level. The southern island is entirely surrounded by reef, but the northern island has a sandy beach for about 20 yards on the lee side. The northern island rises sheer from the reef, giving a plateau on top. The "cliffs" vary from 10 to 40 feet in height. The plateau is covered with two types of vegetation. One type is a Pigface (*Mesembrianthemum* sp.) which makes a coarse kind of rocky lawn, whilst the other type is the Nitre-bush (*Nitraria Schoberi*), large areas being covered with very dense scrub, very difficult to walk through, and varying in height from three to six feet. The southern island consists of three portions connected by a large area of flat rock upon which is a large lagoon. This is not connected with the sea, but receives the spray. This island is far more difficult to land upon, as there is no sandy beach. However, parties often visit it because large numbers of Black and Mountain Duck are often found on the lagoon. I have seen the following nesting upon the Baudin Rocks:—

Fairy Penguin (*Eudyptula undina*).—These nest in large numbers, two eggs to the clutch. The nest is usually a depression under the *Nitraria* (nitre) shrubs. Many addled eggs and variously-aged young are to be found in January, but very few fresh eggs.

White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax fuscescens*).—These birds nest each year, usually in December and early January, and always in the same spot on the southern island. In 1932 I found nests with eggs, three or four to a clutch; in 1933 the nests were deserted, but had been used; in 1930, 1931 and 1934 there were young in the nests. Some of the nests, which are the usual cormorant-nest of sticks, are built on top of the bushes, whilst others are built in branches which hang over the edge of the cliff.

Cormorant sp.—The first time that I visited the Rocks (1930) I found a Cormorant's nest with young in it on the northern

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island, and again this year (1934), but I am unable to say to what species they belonged.

Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*).—These birds nest each year, but I am usually too late to find eggs. In 1934 there were hundreds of young on the northern island, but no eggs and no signs of the birds on the southern island. In 1933 a few eggs were found on the southern island, but none on the northern. In 1932 eggs were found on both islands. In 1930 and 1931 only the northern island was visited, and a few eggs were seen in 1931, but plenty in 1930; in fact, in 1930 it was difficult to walk without stepping on eggs. I know that the date was 2nd January in 1930, and 18th January in 1934, but I am afraid that except for saying that it was late in January I do not know the exact dates for the other years.

Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).—I have never been there early enough to find them nesting, but nests which undoubtedly belong to these birds are to be seen.

Nankeen Night-Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*).—This species was found nesting on both islands in 1933 and 1934. The nest is usually a platform of sticks about 18 x 8 inches, with a cavity 9 x 1 inches. Usually there are three eggs. They breed in considerable numbers, probably several hundred nests were seen this year (1934). One peculiar nest was found; it was on the bare ground under a bush, and surrounded by a few twigs; it contained two fresh, but slightly-stained eggs, and the bird was flushed.

The following species have been observed on the islands. Several probably breed there, but so far I have not found their nests, unless as mentioned above:—Fairy Penguin (*Eudyptula undina*); White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax fuscescens*); Australian Gannet (*Sula serrator*); Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*); Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*); Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*); Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*); Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*); Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*); Eastern Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*); White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*); Reef Heron (*Demigretta sacra*); Nankeen Night-Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*); Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*); Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*); White-breasted Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*); Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*); Rock Parrot (*Neophema petrophila*); Little Grassbird (*Megalurus gramineus*); Grey-backed Silveryeye (*Zosterops halmaturina*); Singing Honey-eater (*Meliphaga virescens*).