

Most of the birds of Cape York are constantly migrating, and the resident official at Somerset told me that the constant change from month to month of the birds seen about his place was most astonishing. The Torres Straits Islands serve as resting places for the birds crossing from New Guinea; Booby Island is evidently thus used, and the number of its land-birds is thus to be accounted for.

This island corresponds thus in this respect with such an island as Heligoland in Europe, which is a well-known halting-place of birds of passage, and at certain seasons swarms with land-birds, resting on their journey, so that ornithologists visit it to procure the rarest of birds. Heligoland also, like Booby Island, is almost devoid of trees, and the birds have to pitch there in the potato-fields. Upwards of 300 species of land-birds rest on the island, which is a point in the direct lines of migratory flight.*

A small cleft runs up into Booby Island, and nearly across it, and, affording shade and shelter, allows of the growth of a small thicket of a shrub-like species of fig. Besides these shrubs the island has little vegetation, except scanty grass, and about half a dozen species of herbs. Amongst the branches of the figs, lives a most beautiful Fruit-Pigeon (*Ptilinopus superbus*), with head of a brilliant purple, the body green, and shoulders red. A Painted Quail (*Turnix melanonotus*), was found amongst the grass. The other birds which I saw or shot were a Land-rail, a Mound-bird (*Megapodius tumulus*), a Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*), a Zosterops (*Z. luteus*), very like *Z. flaviceps* of Fiji, a Pachycephala, a Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*), and a thrush-like bird, of which I saw only one specimen.

The Pigeon seems to be a permanent resident in the island. The Megapodius astonished me most; I did not know that the bird possessed powers of flight sufficient to take it to such an island; it must have been migrating. The fact no doubt explains the occurrence of species of Megapodius in various Pacific Islands. Sometimes the quails are present in Booby Island in enormous numbers. On August 13th, 1841, the officers of the "Beagle" shot on it 145 quails, 18 pigeons, 12 rails of two species, and 3 pigeons.†

The Pigeon and the Rail were procured for the first time

* J. F. Naumann, "Ueber den Vogelzug mit besonderer Hinsicht auf Heligoland," s. 18. Rhea, Leipzig, 1846.

† H. Seebohm, "Supplementary Notes on the Ornithology of Heligoland," Ibid., 1877, p. 156.

† "Discoveries in Australia. Also an Account of Capt. Owen Stanley's Visits to the Islands of the Arafura Sea," Vol. II., p. 329. By J. Lort Stokes Commander, R.N. London, Boone, 29, New Bond Street, 1846.