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## SHORT NOTE

### Red-billed Gulls feeding on ngaio at the Mokohinau Islands

During a visit to the islands of the Mokohinau group, Hauraki Gulf, from 26 November to 2 December 1987, I observed Red-billed Gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae*) hovering over, landing on and apparently feeding from ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*) bushes on Burgess and Aihau (Trig) Islands. Upon careful observation it became clear that the gulls were feeding on the unripe berries of the plant.

On most days, gulls were seen on ngaio bushes in the morning up to 09.00 and from late afternoon to about dusk. On Burgess, birds were seen to fly directly from the breeding colony (c.450 pairs) to the bushes, and after feeding, some at least returned directly to the colony. Most nests contained eggs or recently hatched chicks. The gulls congregated over, and on, the bushes in groups of up to 30 birds. Birds sometimes pulled berries off while still on the wing; otherwise they landed on the vegetation (usually making several abortive landings until they found supportive branches) before delving into the foliage for the berries. On occasion, on Burgess Island, several flocks of gulls were in sight foraging on different ngaio bushes at the same time.

Red-billed Gulls have previously been recorded feeding on the berries of taupata (*Coprosma repens*) and puka (*Meryta sinclairii*) (Oliver 1955) but although Sandager (1889) described them driving cicadas from ngaio bushes and feeding on them I know of no previous records of the berries being eaten.

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