Introduction and acknowledgements,
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INTRODUCTION

The A.U.F.C. Scientific Camp to Shoe Island and the Slipper Island Group (August 18-25th, 1973) was attended by 25 members. These islands (Fig. 1) were chosen because they formed an important link in the club’s series of offshore island studies that over the past six years have been concentrated within the broad arc of the Bay of Plenty. In recent years camps have been held on Cuvier Island, Red Mercury Island, Aldermen Islands and Whale Island. With a camp of this size, Slipper Island was admirably suited as a base, especially when we learned of the availability of an old farm-house.

Studies in archaeology, geology, algology, lichenology and subtidal ecology were centred on and around Slipper Island. Several day trips were made to two smaller islands, Penguin and Rabbit, located off Slipper’s south-western tip (Fig. 1). These were of considerable interest to the botanists and ornithologists. During the week a short visit was also made to Watchman Rock (Fig. 1). For six members of the party the last part of the week (August 23-25th) was spent camped at Shag Bay on Shoe Island, where studies were carried out in botany, ornithology, geology and archaeology.

Description of the islands.

Shoe Island and the Slipper Island Group lie 3 to 4 km off the east Coromandel coast, due east and south-east of Tairua (Fig. 1).

Shoe Island (40 hectares) appears roughly shoe-shaped when seen from the north or south, and slopes gently to the west. It has near-vertical cliffs on the western (landward) side. The only good landing spots, except in westerlies or north-westerlies, are at Shag Bay and Landing Point (Fig. 2). Both localities offer good camping sites. Permanent fresh-water is available in the northern valley, and probably also in the valley just south of Shag Bay. Access to various parts of the island is often difficult along the ridges because of the thick scrub, however the valleys provide easier going.

Slipper Island (210 hectares), lying 5 km south of Shoe Island, has a slipper-like profile when viewed from the north-west. The island is roughly triangular (Fig. 2) with its highest point at the northern-most tip (142 m) and a beacon on the end of the eastern peninsula. Swamps exist at the north and south ends of the island separated by a large broadly-rounded central hill (105 m). Cliffs border the eastern side of Slipper Island making access to

the rocks below difficult, and possible only where indicated by the arrows in figure 2. The west and south sides are bordered by lower cliffs, boulder beaches and three sandy beaches (Fig. 2). The island has been farmed for just over a century. Farm buildings and a small private air strip are all at Home Bay.

Watchman Rock, 11 m high and 1.5 km due west of Home Bay, is little more than 10 by 30 m in size.

Penguin Island (8 hectares) and Rabbit Island (11 hectares) have never been farmed but both have been subjected to periodic burning in the past. Regeneration, however has progressed to mature stands of pohutukawa-mahoe since the last burning. Steep-sided Penguin Island has a small flat and boulder beach at the south-western end (Fig. 2), offering the easiest spot for landing and camping. A derelict mutton-birders’ hut still stands there. Another boulder beach suitable for landing is located at the north-western end of Penguin Island.

Rabbit Island, also steep-sided, has a large flat area in the centre covered by coastal forest. Boulder beaches suitable for landing are located along the eastern and north-western sides. Unfavourable winds and tides can make landing on both Penguin and Rabbit Islands hazardous.

Previous work on Penguin and Rabbit Islands is restricted to a brief Internal Affairs Report\(^1\) and on Shoe Island to two similarly brief reports;\(^2,3\) Cochrane\(^4\) mapped the plant communities of all four islands.

*Rattus norvegicus* (Norway rat) occurs on Shoe and Slipper Islands and *Rattus exulans* (kiore) on Penguin and Rabbit Islands. Rabbits occur on Shoe and Penguin Islands.

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**Fig. 1. Locality map of Shoe Island and Slipper Island Group.**
Fig. 2. Shoe Island and Slipper Island Group place names. Arrows indicate where access may be gained down the cliffs on the eastern side of Slipper Island.

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REFERENCES

Unpublished reports of the Internal Affairs file 46/29/451:
2 Bell, I.C. 1951: Shoe Island.
Fig. 1. Bathymetry and station localities.