

numerous, has the habit of building up a pile of twigs and sticks, twenty or thirty inches in height, particularly on Howlands, where more material of that sort is at hand, on which they make their nest. When frightened, these birds disgorge the contents of their stomachs, the capacity of which is sometimes very astonishing. They are gross feeders, and I have often seen one disgorge three or four large flying-fish fifteen or eighteen inches in length.

“The Frigate Bird (*Tachypetes aquilus*) I have already alluded to. It is a large, rapacious bird, the tyrant of the feathered community. It lives almost entirely by piracy, forcing other birds to contribute to its support. These frigate birds hover over the island constantly, lying in wait for fishing birds returning from the sea, to whom they give chase, and the pursued bird escapes only by disgorging its prey, which the pursuer very adroitly catches in the air. They also prey upon flying-fish and others that leap from sea to sea, but never dive for fish, and rarely even approach the water.

“The above are the kinds of birds most numerous represented, and to which we owe the existing deposits of guano. Besides these are the Tropic Birds, which are found in considerable numbers on Howland's Island, but seldom on Jarvis's or Baker's. They prefer the former, because there are large blocks or fragments of beach rock scattered over the island's surface, under which they burrow out nests for themselves. A service is sometimes required of this bird, which may, perhaps, be worthy of notice. A setting bird was taken from her nest and carried to sea by a vessel just leaving the island. On the second day, at sea, a rag, on which was written a message, was attached to the bird's feet, who returned to the nest, bringing with it the intelligence of the departed vessel. This experiment succeeded so well that, subsequently, these birds were carried from Howland's to Baker's Island (forty miles distant), and, on being liberated there, one after the other, as occasion demanded, brought back messages, proving themselves useful in the absence of other means of communication. The game birds, snipe, plover, and curlew, frequent the islands