

SHORT NOTES

SUB-FOSSIL RECORDS OF THE LITTLE GREY KIWI IN THE NORTH ISLAND

Buller, *Birds of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Vol. II, p. 328 (cf. also *Trans. N.Z. Inst.*, 8, 1876, p. 193) discussing the Little Grey Kiwi, states "A fine specimen, for which I am indebted to Mr. Morgan Carkeek, of the Survey Department, was obtained by that gentleman on Mt. Hector, at the head of the Hutt River, in December, 1875. It was caught by his dog among the snowgrass at an elevation of about 3,000 feet. At a higher altitude, he found the species relatively abundant, and he met with it occasionally below the snow-line, frequenting many places in the bush free from undergrowth."

Since the species has not since been recorded from the North Island, later writers have hesitated to admit the validity of Buller's record. Oliver, in the first and second editions of *New Zealand Birds*, and the *Checklist* each regard the Tararua Range record as doubtful or unconfirmed.

The Canterbury Museum possesses kiwi bones from sub-fossil deposits in the North Island which are indistinguishable from bones from skeletons of *Apteryx oweni* from the South Island. Unfortunately, the material is mainly of leg-bones, and it would be invaluable to have a skull as confirmation. However, the bones obtained, some of which are fully adult, are too small to be *Apteryx australis mantelli*.

The list of bones and locations follows:

1. Midden, Akiteo, Wellington. R. tibio-tarsus. Early collection, no date.
2. Midden, Kamo, Whangarei. Proximal end R. tibio-tarsus. Early collection, no date.
3. Moa-hunter midden, Opito, Coromandel Peninsula. Distal end and shaft R. tibio-tarsus. Shafts of R. and L. tarsus-metatarsi. Coll. R. J. Scarlett, January, 1960.
4. Hukanui 7 a. Cave, c. 2,500 feet elevation, about 30 miles from Napier. Proximal end and shaft of sub-mature R. femur. 26. 5. 1959. Coll. W. H. Hartree, R. J. Scarlett and J. C. Yaldwyn.
- Hukanui 7 a. L. tibia. 12. 6. 1961. Coll. W. H. Hartree and R. J. Scarlett.
5. Hukunui No. 5. Cave c. 2,200 feet elevation, about 30 from Napier. Immature R. femur and L. tarso-metatarsus. Mature R. distal, R. and L. distal, R. and L. tibio-tarsi, L. distal, R. and L. tarso-metatarsi, sacrum. 24. 5. 1959. Coll. W. H. Hartree and R. J. Scarlett.
6. Pigeon Bush No. 1. Rockshelter, c. 2,000 feet elevation, about 30 miles from Napier. Sub-mature L. femur. 1958. Coll. R. H. Hartree.

In addition, a Moa-hunter midden below Rangatapu pa, on the Waingongoro River, near Hawera, found by the writer in 1960, and excavated by Mrs. T. L. Canavan, has yielded a mature R. femur, eroded at both ends, and the shaft of a L. femur. This site is near the locality on the Waingongoro River where Walter Mantell collected many bones of moas and other birds in 1847, and it seems possible that an unlocalised bone of *Apteryx oweni* from the Mantell Collection in the British Museum (Natural History) was from this locality. According to Lydekker, *Catalogue of the Fossil Birds in the British Museum*, 1891,

p. 218, this is a "right tarso-metatarsus, imperfect at the extremities and somewhat weathered; from a superficial deposit in New Zealand. This specimen, which has a length of 0.061, shows all the characteristic features."

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A FIRST RECORD OF THE EXTINCT NEW ZEALAND COOT FROM THE NORTH ISLAND

The Extinct New Zealand Coots, hitherto known as *Palaeolimnas chathamensis* and *P. prisca*, have been recorded from fifteen localities in the South Island as well as in the Chatham Islands (Brodkorb & Dawson, 1961).

In the British Museum (Natural History), there is a collection of bird bones made "in the notorious Rauparaha's kitchen middens by Mr. A. Hamilton" (Forbes, 1892), and amongst these I have identified a tarsometatarsus and a coracoid of "*Palaeolimnas*." The location of these middens was probably the Taupo *pa* on the present site of Plimmerton beach, Wellington west coast (Dawson, 1961). One or more deposits may be represented in the collection since the bird remains found range from those of the Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) to various kinds of fowl (*Gallus* sp.).

Although remains of Extinct Coots are really only abundant in the Chatham Islands, there are sufficient records to show that a species, identical with or closely allied to the Chatham bird, was once widespread throughout the South Island. In the North Island bones of small subfossil birds have been mainly found in limestone caves, probably isolated from the former habitat of coots, and it may be that further remains of these coots will be found when coastal sand dunes, early middens, and swamps are investigated in closer detail.

Meanwhile, the bones in the British Museum (Natural History), under the temporary registration numbers R6346 and R6404, appear to be the only records of "*Palaeolimnas*" in the North Island of New Zealand.

REFERENCES

- Brodkorb, P., and Dawson, E. W., 1961 — Nomenclature of Quaternary Coots from oceanic islands. *Auk*, **78** (4).
 Dawson, E. W., 1961 — A possible association of Maori and Kakapo in the Wellington district. *Rec. Dominion Mus.*, **4**.
 Forbes, H. O., 1892 — Preliminary notice of additions to the extinct avifauna of New Zealand. *Trans. N.Z. Inst.*, **24**: 185-9.

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AN EARLY SPECIMEN OF THE KAKAPO (*STRIGOPS HABROPTILUS*) FROM STEWART ISLAND

According to Williams (1956: 39), evidence has been produced from time to time of the occurrence of the Kakapo in Stewart Island but, since birds from the fiordland region of the South Island are said to have been liberated on the island, it is not clear "whether the birds that have been reported since are descendants of these, or whether . . . there has always been a resident population . . ." Later, Williams (1960: 219) stated: "Though Kakapo have recently been recorded from Stewart Island, only two museum specimens appear to exist. However, if it is confirmed that these, now at Leiden, are indeed from the Temminch Collection . . . then the question as to whether the