

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.

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ELLIOT W. DAWSON



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

species is indigenous to that place would appear to be settled, for introductions from the mainland are most unlikely to have been made as far back as the early years of the nineteenth century. Here, then, we are likely to have another subspecies, so far undescribed."

In December, 1847, Pucheran gave an account of the Kakapo based on a specimen sent to the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris: "C'est d'après un individu récemment envoyé au Musée de Paris par M. Jules Verreaux, l'un de ses voyageurs, que nous avons émis les réflexions qui vont suivre." Jules Verreaux (1807-1873) was one of a well-known family of natural history collectors (Salvin, 1873) and he spent some time in Australia (Iredale, 1945). It is not certain whether he visited New Zealand but it appears that he did so and that he probably collected this specimen of Kakapo in Stewart Island since Pucheran (1847: 389) noted: "L'individu que possède notre collection nationale, provient de l'île Stewart, au sud de la Nouvelle-Zélande. Mais cette espèce habite aussi dans cette dernière localité."

Williams (1960: 225) listed a specimen from the Paris Museum in this way: "Mounted specimens (6) 1 " Otago, S.I. ", 1847, *Verreaux*". M. Christian Jouanin, to whom I am indebted for this favour, sent me a copy of the labels attached to this specimen and the information given is:

"De la Nouvelle-Zélande (Otago -Mittel Island) par M. Jules Verreaux (Avril 1847. Catalogue General No. 240). Cet individu a été pris dans l'île Stewart, au sud de la Nouvelle-Zélande."

It is not clear whether Verreaux himself collected this specimen or whether a correspondent living in Otago sent it to him. The important thing seems to be that it is likely that this specimen is a genuine example of the former population of Kakapo in Stewart Island, and, like the Leiden specimens, has considerable scientific value.

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THREE KINDS OF RAILS AT MEREMERE

An apparently isolated colony of comparatively rare birds, Spotless Crake (*P. tabuensis plumbea*), Marsh Crake (*P. pusilla affinis*), and Banded Rail (*R. philippensis assimilis*), has been discovered within fifty yards of the village at the Steam Power Station at Meremere. The Spotless Crake survives here under conditions different from those thought beneficial to its welfare, i.e., narrow swamps, mostly in hilly country. The Marsh Crake could easily be expected but the Banded Rail is now considered to be rare away from coastal creeks. Nor was their discovery the end result of a painstaking and laborious search, but came about by mere chance while I was endeavouring to fill an idle hour by stalking a Bittern. The place is readily accessible for study by anyone with transport calling at my house at 6 Herewhini St., Meremere.

I established an observation point on the edge of a more or less permanent shallow pool where the birds are living throughout