

AUSTRALIAN STRAGGLERS IN NEW ZEALAND, WITH FIRST RECORD OF THE FAN-TAILED CUCKOO

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The following notes include the re-identification as an Indian Waterhen (*Gallinula chloropus indica*) of a specimen in Canterbury Museum believed to be of New Zealand origin (formerly identified as an Australian Black-tailed Waterhen, *Tribonyx ventralis*), together with new records based on specimens sent in to the Museum of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis pyrrhophanus*) (first New Zealand record) and Fork-tailed Swift (*Apus pacificus*).

INDIAN WATERHEN. *Gallinula chloropus indica* Blyth, 1842.

A specimen (Canterbury Museum AV. 2437) included in the collection purchased by the Museum in 1942 from the late Mr. A. C. O'Connor and identified as *Tribonyx ventralis* (Gould, 1837) (Otago, ex Smyth Collection) now proves to be of this species. It is recorded under *T. ventralis* in the *Checklist* (Fleming *et al.* 1953) as "'Otago' without date"; Oliver (1955) mentions "specimens without data in museums" presumably including this specimen.

Unfortunately some small doubt must remain as to whether the bird was collected in New Zealand, as the above data had been recorded in Mr. O'Connor's catalogue only and no collector's label was attached to the specimen. It originated from the collection made by the taxidermist, W. Smyth, who worked in Dunedin in the period approximately 1895-1910, much of whose material was derived from the Dunedin area. After W. Smyth's death, his bird skins passed to Bills and Rowley. The skin in question was purchased by C. A. Fleming in January, 1940, and given to A. C. O'Connor.

The material available in New Zealand collections proved insufficient to enable the specimen to be identified down to subspecies. We have accordingly submitted it to Dr. Alexander Wetmore, Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and we are grateful to Dr. Wetmore for the following report (*in litt.*): "The gallinule . . . is an interesting specimen. After careful comparison I have identified it as *Gallinula chloropus indica*, an immature individual with the frontal plate not yet fully developed. I have made a thorough study to be certain that it was not the typical race of this species that might have been carried rather casually by some traveller to New Zealand. The two races concerned are fairly similar in size, but *indica* differs in this stage in being darker brown on the back and wings, and also in having a wash of this same darker colour on the head and hindneck."

Commenting also on the possibility that the specimen provides a New Zealand record, Dr. Wetmore says: "Range [of *indica*] . . . differs somewhat from some of the earlier statements, particularly in that birds from Arabia and Iraq are now placed with typical *chloropus* . . . Breeds from Kashmir, southern Tibet, Assam, southern and eastern China and Japan south to southern India, Ceylon, central and southern Burma (locally), Cambodia, the Riu Kiu Islands, Formosa, and Botal

Tabaga. Migrant in the north, a few remaining through the winter months in southern Japan; common at that season in northern Siam and throughout Burma; reported casually from Korea and Sakhalin.

"There is no question but that this bird is migratory in the northern section of the breeding range. I have found no definite records for the East Indies or the Philippines but believe that eventually *indica* will be recorded there as a winter visitor though to date it does not seem to have been distinguished from the resident forms of these areas.

"Under these circumstances it would seem reasonable to accept the casual occurrence of *indica* in New Zealand."

Our thanks are due to Mr. A. Lendon, of Adelaide, who pointed out during a visit to the Museum that the specimen had been misidentified.

EASTERN AUSTRALIAN FAN-TAILED CUCKOO. *Cacomantis pyrrhophanus prionurus* (Lichtenstein, 1823)

On 15th June, 1960, a specimen (AV. 19616) was sent in by Mrs. M. R. Page, of Governor's Bay (Lyttelton Harbour, distant eight miles from Christchurch). It had been killed that day by a cat, but was quite undamaged. Colours of soft parts: iris pale brown, eyelids lemon ochre, skin round gape orange; female.

The species ranges from New Guinea through the Solomons and New Hebrides to Australia, New Caledonia and Fiji. Mr. K. A. Hindwood, Honorary Ornithologist, Australian Museum, who kindly examined the specimen considered it to be a typical example of the above subspecies. He states (*in litt*): "The species has been recorded throughout the year from near Sydney where it is considered nomadic in its movements during the autumn and winter months . . . A tendency to wander is indicated by the fact that there are two records of the occurrence of the species on Lord Howe Island, some 300 miles east of New South Wales. One of these specimens is still in existence and I have compared it with material from New South Wales and also with the New Zealand specimen, and it agrees with such birds." (Cf. Hindwood, 1940.)

Mr. Hindwood gives the following additional notes on his examination of the specimen: "From the very fine, scarcely noticeable, flecking on the underparts of the New Zealand bird it would seem that it is not quite fully adult, a fact also indicated by the brownish colour of the secondary wing feathers, which in fully adult birds are the same colour as the primary wing feathers."

FORK-TAILED SWIFT. *Apus pacificus pacificus* (Latham, 1801)

The following are records of two specimens in the Museum's collection:

(a) (AV. 15170.) This specimen, mummified but with plumage little damaged, was rescued from a kitten by Mr. A. L. Adamson, at Manakiaiaua, South Westland, on 31st May, 1957.

(b) (AV. 19739.) This bird, an adult male, was sent to Mr. B. D. Heather from Waianiwa, Southland, by Mr. D. N. Price, who found it on his farm on 20th November, 1960. Mr. Heather forwarded it to the Museum. The accompanying photograph of the dead swift was taken before it was despatched and appeared in the *Weekly News* of 1st March, 1961.

Our specimens have not been critically determined to subspecies, but are presumably of this form, which is present in Australia as a summer migrant.

REFERENCES

- Fleming, C.A. et al., 1953: *Checklist of New Zealand Birds*, Wellington.
Hindwood, K. A., 1940: The Birds of Lord Howe Island. *Emu* 40: 1-86.
Oliver, W. R. B., 1955: (2nd. ed.). *New Zealand Birds*, Wellington.

