

## PLUMAGE OF BLACK FANTAIL

Dr. Soper's observation on the Black Fantail (*Rhipidura f. fuliginosa*) published in Notornis XI, No. 3, p. 195, in which he describes having observed a mated pair of black-phased birds in which both individuals had white earcoverts, reminded me of a specimen received at the Dominion Museum during 1963. This bird, killed on the road in Goose Bay, Marlborough on 26/3/63, had prominent white earcoverts and was proved to be a male by dissection.

Museum collections unfortunately contain only small series of black-phased birds, and most of these are of old origin and many insufficiently labelled. Nevertheless from the series studied at the Dominion Museum in Wellington and at the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, the following table was drawn up.

Register Number	Date Collected	Sex	White Earcoverts	Uniformly Dark	Place Collected
DM-1700	March 1904	F		X	Nelson
DM-1701	Nov. 1904	F		X	Nelson
DM-1702	Apr. 1905	F	x inconspicuous and on left side only		Nelson
DM-1703	Nov. 1904	F		X	Nelson
DM-1704	Apr. 1905	F		X	Nelson
DM-10001	26/3/63	M	x		Goose Bay
Canterbury					
AV-923	1892	F		X	Otago
Av-260	3/4/1909	M	x inconspicuous and on left side only		

Other specimens, unfortunately not sexed, show a great variation in the amount of white feathering on the earcoverts, if present, which can occur either on the right or on the left side or, symmetrically on both sides of the head.

If the sexes marked on the old labels in collections can be relied upon, it seems that the white markings on the earcoverts are more likely to occur on the males than on the females, but they can occur on both sexes.

From the above it seems evident that Dr. Oliver's (N.Z. Birds, 1955, p. 495) statement "The female has a white spot over each earcovert" is not supported by the evidence of carefully sexed specimens.

— F. C. KINSKY



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