

A FURTHER RECORD OF AMERICAN WHIMBREL

On a routine check of the birds at Mataitai, Clevedon, on 29/9/68, a close party of eight female Bar-tailed Godwits busily feeding, was noted in a wet field just inland from the tidal mudflat. When a four-foot telescope was swung round on its head-high tripod to check them, a feeding Whimbrel (*N. phaeopus*) was found about a chain from the Godwits. At about one hundred and twenty yards the big telescope revealed more detail. The size and uniformly dark brown colour indicated the possibility of its being an American Whimbrel, so the telescope was held on it until a Harrier put the birds up. The Whimbrel flew out on to the mudflat where a team of young birdwatchers was operating. The bird was disturbed and flew several times without going further away. Its back and rump were shown each time, but on three occasions distinctly, and they were as brown as the rest of the upper surface. It has become a habit with the writer to check all Whimbrels seen for the light rump and lower back of *variegatus*, the wholly strong brown of the upper surface of *hudsonicus*, and the cream and light chocolate of the upper tail of *tahitiensis*.

The wariness and restlessness of this bird, which had gone the next day, agreed with my experience with an American Whimbrel at Ohiwa Harbour, Bay of Plenty, in 1949 (Notornis 4, 18-21).

— H. R. McKENZIE

[Most Whimbrels in New Zealand, whether *variegatus* or *hudsonicus*, are flighty and restless. — Ed.]



LETTER

The Authorship of *cristatus* for the Owllet-Nightjar

Mr. R. J. Scarlet's confusion in the matter of the authorship of *cristatus* for the Owllet-Nightjar is understandable because, as he mentions (*Notornis*, Vol. 15, 1968, p. 257), some recent authors attribute the name to John White (*Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, 1790) while others give the authority as Shaw (*loc. cit.*). However, as far back as 1834 Swainson (*A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural History*, p. 65) indicated that the names of the birds described in White's *Journal* were given by Shaw, as did Sherborn in 1891 (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. 7), the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1897 (Vol. 51, p. 436) and Waite in 1904 (*Memoirs* (2) *N.S.W. Naturalists' Club*).

A perusal of the paper in the *Emu* (Vol. 23, 1924, pp. 209-215) dealing with White's *Journal*, and subsequent relevant correspondence (*Emu*, Vol. 24, p. 70, p. 71, p. 147) leaves no doubt at all that Shaw was responsible for the scientific names of both the birds and the fish described in White's *Journal* and that the botanical names and those of the mammals were given by Dr. Smith and John Hunter respectively.

The correct usage of *cristatus* Shaw in its present combination with *Aegotheles* is *cristata*.