FIRST NEW ZEALAND RECORD OF MAGELLANIC PENGUIN (Spheniscus magellanicus)

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On the afternoon of 12 March 1972 a penguin in a sick and exhausted condition was found in the surf at Waimarama Beach, Hawkes Bay (39° 50'S - 176° 50'E), by Mark Hedley-Smith of Clive. When taken from the water it was unable to stand, but there were no visible signs of injury.

When transferred to the Marineland of New Zealand in Napier on 13 March it was found to have started its annual moult and was not immediately identified because of its faded plumage (see Fig. 1). The weight was 6¼lb (2.85kg) and it was given a course of 1,250 mil penicillin in capsule form three times daily. By 19 March food intake was increased to 4 fish per hour and a preliminary identification was made on 1 April when the moult was virtually completed. On 4 April its weight had increased to 9¼lb (4.2kg) and identification was confirmed on 15 April as a Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus* (Forster, 1781).

Murphy (1936) records the distribution of this species as breeding at the Falkland Islands, and at islets along the Patagonian coast from 41°S, southwards to Staten Island, Cape Horn, Ildefonso, and other outliers of the Horn, and thence northward along the Pacific coast to Santa Maria Island and the Juan Fernandez Islands offshore. During migration it ranges northward along the Atlantic coast to Southern Brazil and on the Pacific coast reaching Coquimbo at 30°S.

FIGURE 1: "Immature" plumage Magellanic Penguin 13/3/72 (Photo: A. Mace).

FIGURE 2: Magellanic Penguin after moult 15/4/72 (Photo: C. J. R. Robertson).

Breeding is from September to January with breeding birds moulting during February and March. A general exodus from breeding localities occurs toward the end of April for the winter dispersal.

From literature available it seems that in the juvenile plumage the bands across the throat are not present, with the entire throat and fore-neck being greyish (Murphy 1936), and Escalante (1970) points out that with juveniles both black bands are not present. It is obvious (Fig. 1) that this bird had one wide black band before moulting, and therefore must have been at least in its second year. The second band appeared only after this moult, presumably indicating that it takes at least 2 years to attain " adult " plumage.

It is interesting to note that the bird took its first fish without the need to be force fed. This and its generally tame behaviour indicates the strong possibility of it having been kept on a ship for some time and then released in New Zealand waters. The bird did not show any inclination to return to the water until 16 April and is held at present in Marineland (see Fig. 2).

LITERATURE CITED

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