

the upper breast, where it formed a "bib" whose lower margin curved high at the shoulder. Here, a white area in front of the angle of the wing was most noticeable, as also were the almost horizontal stance, tail-jerking and bobbing. The stance and shoulder pattern are well illustrated by Watson & Campbell (1964: 72-73). Witherby *et al.* (1940: plate 117) do not show the shoulder marking. Edgar (1969) suggests that this may be a variable field character. The rump and tail were easily seen as the bird flew on more than one occasion showing the brown centre and white edges with some barring on the tail. The legs were greenish yellow. No call was heard. We watched until after a time the bird moved into mangroves and did not re-appear.

Three previous sightings, each of a single Common Sandpiper, have been recorded in this journal. These were at New Plymouth on 24 October 1964, Kerikeri on 20 March 1969 and Waikanae on 24 November 1972. W. F. Cash (pers. comm.) found one at the mouth of the Waiongona River, Taranaki, on 13 February 1972, where it was seen on four other occasions. The final sighting was on 9 April 1972.

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A SIGHTING OF THE PIOPIO OR NATIVE THRUSH

Sometime about March 1970, we were seeking *Pittosporum turneri* in the Hauhungaroa Range when we observed a young Piopio sitting on a branch and chirping. Shortly a parent flew in at seven or eight feet from the ground and fed it. This was repeated several times in the twenty minutes or so that we watched them, eight or ten feet above us. The parent made no sound and moved almost stealthily through the heavy scrub, taking note of us but showing no alarm. She would fly straight in, feed the chick, turn sideways and observe us for a few seconds and then fly off, keeping low. We kept perfectly still and studied every detail of the parent bird, also the chick, which differed little from the parent in general appearance. Another chick was chirping a little further downhill in the cover. They gave a straight plain chirp, not a trilly chirp like the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelus*). RB was quite sure of the identity of the bird as he had been shown a newly dead one by an old man at Raurimu in the King Country many years before and remembered very well the details of it.

In size it was a little larger than a Song Thrush. The bill was curved down a little towards the end. It was of an indefinite colour, as also were the legs. The overall upper colour was more like that of a Fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata*) without the dark streaks. The tail was a good length, rounded at the end, with lighter fawn edging. It was turned down, more so at the end, not straight like that of a Song Thrush. The throat was white, the breast fawn with a few irregular darker markings. In correspondence with H. R. McKenzie we related this event and he told us of the "*Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*," by Falla, Sibson & Turbott, in which is an illustration of the two native thrushes. On Plate 16 we noted that the figure marked "b," the North Island Piopio, had the upper surface too dark and that it should have been more like the figure "a," featuring the South Island Piopio. The throat and breast of "b" as pictured is matched by that of our bird. The downward bend of the tail has been missed on the plate.

We commented at the time on the lateness of the season for young birds. Perhaps this pair had lost an earlier clutch or brood and nested again. It was indeed gratifying that there was a very good chance of the young of this rare species being successfully reared.

REFERENCE

FALLA, R. A.; SIBSON, R. B.; TURBOTT, E. G. 1970. A field guide to the birds of New Zealand and outlying islands. 2nd ed. 256 pp. London: Collins.

REG. BELL
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LETTERS

The Editor,
Sir,

BLACK FANTAIL IN THE WAIRARAPA

Following Mr Stidolph's contribution (December 1973) on the occurrence of the Black Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) in the Wairarapa, it may be of interest to record a further sighting in the area. On 17 March 1974, I observed a Black Fantail feeding vigorously in the garden of Mr Ralph Garland, Miro Street, Masterton. It was accompanied by a normal pied bird and after being watched for several minutes both fed away to the north. I was told that the Black Fantail had not been noted previously about the home.

REFERENCE

STIDOLPH, R. H. D. 1973. Black Fantail in North Island. *Notornis* 20 (4): 380.

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28 March 1974