

The Editor,
Sir,

FALCON KILLING CATTLE EGRET

During the course of research on the New Zealand Falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*), I came across an instance of a falcon killing a Cattle Egret (*Ardeola ibis coromanda*) on a station in the Waihopai Valley in May 1974.

The bird was completely white as regards feathering. The bill and circum-orbital ring were yellow. The legs were black with yellow-green soles and a slight green tinge above the knee. The measurements were as follows:

Culmen	60 mm
Wing length	257 mm
Tarsus	95 mm
Middle toe and claw	84 mm
Tail	86 mm

The specimen was donated to Canterbury Museum and identified by Ron Scarlett as a Cattle Egret in non-breeding plumage. This is named as *Ardeola ibis coromanda* in the British *Handbook* and as *Bubulcus ibis coromandus* in the N.Z. *Checklist*.

Although this is an unusual bird to feature on the prey list of the Falcon, it is not uncommon for immature female falcons to take White-faced Herons (*Ardea novaehollandiae*). Cases which I have been able to verify of falcons taking poultry have also been the work of immature female falcons, these being the only ones large enough and inexperienced enough to tackle such large quarry.

It is unfortunate that, as in this case with the Cattle Egret, N.Z. Falcons coming near homesteads are still greeted with a charge of shot. There is no doubt that Man is directly (by killing) and indirectly (by habitat destruction) responsible for the decline of this unique falcon. Education is the only way of enforcing legislation in these remote areas.

N. C. FOX

Zoology Department,
University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, 1
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The Editor,
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OYSTERCATCHER ETYMOLOGY

Dictionaries, as my wise old headmaster used to say, are dangerous instruments in the wrong hands. I suspect that some unwary user has rightly resorted to Liddell & Scott, but has fallen into the trap of confusing haemat-opus (with a long penultimate 'o') with haemato-pus (with short 'o'). Thus, his references to Euripides are quite irrelevant. If he had consulted Lewis & Short's *Latin Dictionary* or Thompson's masterly *Glossary of Greek Birds* he would have found that haematopus (blood foot/leg) occurs in Pliny and was a rare