THRUSHES FEEDING ON MARINE SNAILS

It is well known that Song Thrushes feed on garden snails but less well known that they may feed on other types of snail. In a paper entitled "Song thrushes feeding on mud snails" (Nye 1971, *Notornis* 18: 211-214), I brought together three independent observations of thrushes feeding on the mud snail *Amphibola crenata* Martyn. Kinsky (1970, *Notornis* 17: 77) was the first to publish such a report when he saw thrushes feeding on mud snails at Rough Island, Nelson, in October 1969, and Mr A. Wright and myself saw the same behaviour at two locations on Otago Peninsula during 1970 and 1971. I have since found smashed shells of *A. crenata* at Papanui Inlet, Otago Peninsula, during the summer of 1973/4 and 1974/5 and a student, Mr G. Shirley, told me that thrushes also fed on mud snails at Purakanui Inlet, about 6 km north of Otago Peninsula, between 1972 and 1974.

In my earlier report, I asked for further records of thrushes feeding on mud snails in different parts of New Zealand as I wanted to consider whether the habit had spread from a single, pioneer bird or had been developed at different times or places by different birds. Since then I have received several reports which are summarised here with some other relevant data. Mr Archie Blackburn wrote from Gisborne to say that he had found broken *A. crenata* shells on his lawn by the Waimata River during October 1969, but not during the whole of the following summer or early summer of 1971, when he wrote. He thought that the later absence of shells was because mud snails had become scarce near his lawn, although thrushes were common in the area. Mr Bruce Campbell wrote to say that between 1920 and 1925 he saw thrushes feeding on the Invercargill estuary and carrying shells, resembling those in my article ,to a concrete embankment where the thrushes smashed these open.

Two further records were sent to me from the Nelson area. Mr G. T. Candy noticed thrushes feeding on mud snails at Clifton Inlet near the mouth of the Motupipi River which is about 100 km from Rough Island, where thrushes were first reported feeding on mud snails by Kinsky. Mr Candy saw a halo of broken mud snail shells around some large stones many times between 1961 and 1973 and thrushes were sometimes seen or heard breaking open the snails. Mr Candy says " . . . from the number of shells present, and the length of time I have observed them, I would say that this represents the work of more than one individual, and more than one generation." The other record from the Nelson area is most illuminating, especially when taken together with a report by a general practitioner in England, writing in the *British Medical Journal* on 18 March 1972 (Radford 1972, *Br. Med. J.* 1: 744). Mr H. F. Heinekamp saw thrushes feeding on the dark or black top shell, *Melagraphia aethiops* Gmelin, at Adele Island, Nelson, during October 1974, and Dr P. Radford, the general practitioner, said " One very cold January I saw a song thrush hammer-

ing periwinkles on a rock on the seashore and, having broken the shells, eating the flesh. Meanwhile, no doubt, other song thrushes inland were searching in vain for snails — their normal diet — under hard-frozen snow." The periwinkles to which Dr Radford refers are almost certainly the common or edible periwinkle, *Littorina littorea* Linnaeus, which looks very similar to *M. aethiops.* These two species are both prosobranch molluscs and not closely related to the two pulmonates *Amphibola crenata* and *Helix aspera,* the garden snail.

Although these reports are more meagre than I had hoped for, the evidence which spans a long time and widely separated places, suggests that individual thrushes may try various snail-like objects for food when they are available and thrushes living by the coast will have ample opportunity to explore the shore and sample marine snails. Presumably, if the thrush succeeds in opening a snail and the flesh is good then the habit may be repeated and copied by other thrushes which observe the local pioneers. On three occasions I found intact shells of the scavenger whelk, *Cominella glandiformis* Reeve, besides thrushes' anvils at Papanui Inlet, which further supports the idea that thrushes will attempt to exploit a variety of snails, a behaviour which will certainly help them to survive when their usual food is in short supply.

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FIRST RECORD OF THE ANTARCTIC PETREL IN NEW ZEALAND

During a beach patrol of the Dargaville West Coast on 22 September 1973 by Northland members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, one specimen of Antarctic Petrel *(Thalassoica antarctica)* was recovered.

I recognised the specimen from amongst an assemblage of Procellariiformes which included a strong southern element, consisting of Cape Pigeon *(Daption capensis),* Antarctic Fulmar *(Fulmarus glacialoides),* Kerguelen Petrel *(Pterodroma brevirostris),* White-headed Petrel *(Pterodroma lessoni),* Blue Petrel *(Halobaena caerulea),* Antarctic Prion *(Pachyptila desolata),* Grey Petrel *(Procellaria cinerea),* and Southern Skua *(Stercorarius skua lonnbergi).* The partially decayed specimen was found on the section between Maunganui Bluff and Baylys Beach by Alan Poulton and Pen Smith, both of Whangarei.

The *Annotated Checklist* (OSNZ 1970: 21) states that the Antarctic Petrel is found breeding on the Antarctic Coast and outlying islands, probably also further inland. Common in the Ross Sea, although breeding has not yet been proved in the Ross Dependency, this species moves north with the pack ice in winter; but rarely ranging