

BIRDS OF THE COOK STRAIT ISLANDS,
COLLECTED BY
PROFESSOR HUGO SCHAUINSLAND
IN 1896 AND 1897

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Recently, while examining collections of New Zealand birds, particularly those of the genus *Nestor*, in various European museums, we were able to spend some time at the Uebersee Museum at Bremen, Germany. The Bremen Museum has a close association with New Zealand natural history since two of its Directors, Otto Finsch and H. H. Schauinsland, visited New Zealand in the course of their careers. Otto Finsch's writings on New Zealand birds, based on material in the Leiden and Bremen museums as well as on other material sent on loan from New Zealand, are well known, and he, himself, has been commemorated in the names of several New Zealand birds. The name and work of Hugo Schauinsland is not, however, so well known to New Zealand naturalists, despite the fact that his name also lives in the same way as Finsch's in the names of many species of the animals of New Zealand. Schauinsland's voyages in the Pacific, and the collections he made during them, have been reported on in a number of places, chiefly in various issues of the *Zoologische Jahrbucher*, in which papers describing New Zealand animals occur. Some of these records have apparently been overlooked by later workers, as, for example, in a recent bulletin on New Zealand lizards (McCann, 1955), which makes no mention of the report on Schauinsland's collections of lizards from the Cook Strait islands and from the Chatham Islands. K. P. Schmidt (1952: 2), also, has commented on the fact that the extent of Schauinsland's work has not been fully realised by later workers.

As far as we can ascertain no report, apart from that of Duncker (1953), has appeared on the collections of birds in New Zealand and the Chatham Islands by Schauinsland, and it is proposed to list here the specimens still existing in the Bremen Museum collections and to remark upon them where necessary. This account may be useful, then, as a record of the distribution of these species in this particular area in 1896 and 1897, especially since an increasing amount of interest is being taken in the ecology of the islands and waters of Cook Strait (Brodie, *et al.*, 1957). Schauinsland's collections from the Chatham Islands have proved to be particularly useful now, since some of the birds, such as the Chatham Island Petrel (*Pterodroma hypoleuca axillaris*) and the Pukeko (*Porphyrio melanotus chathamensis*) not well represented in museum collections, are included in the Bremen material.

In addition to this, much other valuable New Zealand and Chatham Island material, ranging from Moriori artifacts to Tuataras, also collected by Schauinsland, has been examined in the Bremen collections, and this includes many hundreds of bones of extinct birds of the Chatham Islands about which more will be said in another place.

The Uebersee-Museum at Bremen is to be particularly noted for its rapid and successful recovery from severe war damage, and further

details of this may be found in the account given by Abel (1950). Several fine cases of New Zealand birds, illustrating extinct or rare species are exhibited, but, perhaps, the most impressive exhibit to a visiting New Zealander is the large habitat group of Tuataras or *Sphenodon* made up from the abundant material brought back by Schauinsland from Stephens and the Trio Islands. This, and other diverse habitat groups, reflect the high standard of display which has been achieved and maintained by the Ubersec-Museum at Bremen. Although small by comparison with such great museums as the British Museum (Natural History), London, it ranks amongst the finest of natural history museums in quality of material, utilisation of space, and novelty of display, and it was our very great privilege to be made welcome there.

The birds from Cook Strait collected by Schauinsland are as follows, although it must be mentioned, with regard to the accompanying comments, that our time was too short in some cases to check all the details of certain birds mounted in display and habitat groups; however, it is hoped that an opportunity will be available in the near future for another visit to the Bremen collections.

Pachyptila turtur.

There is one female Fairy Prion on display, collected by Schauinsland on January 3, 1897, on Stephens Island. As is well known, this species is one of the most abundant breeding birds of the Cook Strait islands, but we were unable to examine the possible subspecific bill and head characters of this specimen.

Puffinus carneipes hullianus.

The Flesh-footed Shearwater is represented by two specimens; one is a female, collected at French Pass, January 3, 1897, and the other is a male from Trio Island, collected December 24, 1896. Large numbers of this species are present in Cook Strait during the breeding season, but its possible breeding place on the Chetwode Islands near French Pass is apparently as yet unconfirmed (cf. Fleming *et al.*, 1953: 20; and, discussion between Yaldwyn and Falla (Brodie *et al.*, 1957: 36)).

Puffinus griseus.

In the collection are a number of skulls and other skeletal remains of Sooty Shearwaters from French Pass, as well as two male skins from Trio Island, collected on December 27, 1896. The *Checklist* (1953: 21) records this species as "Breeding in small numbers . . . on shores and islands of Cook Strait."

Puffinus gavia gavia.

The Tuatara habitat group contains six Fluttering Shearwaters, collected from the Trio Islands by Schauinsland, while there are skins of two males from Stephens Island and of three juveniles from the Trio Islands in the collections. It may be mentioned here that, according to Schmidt (1952: 4), Schauinsland apparently visited only the Middle Trios, the largest member of the islet and two rocks comprising the "Trio Islands." The *Checklist* (1953: 21) records this species as "Breeding . . . islands in Queen Charlotte Sound, The Trios and formerly Stephen Island (Cook Strait)." According to Mr. J. C. Yaldwyn (*in litt.*, 1957), there are "Small numbers on Stephens, very large numbers on Trios . . . not on Brothers."

Pterodroma cooki cooki.

There are eight specimens of Cook's Petrel mounted in the Tuatara habitat group, but the collecting locality is no more precisely recorded than "Neu Seeland. Schauinsland 1896/97." There appear to be no records of this species breeding on the Cook Strait islands, although occasionally it has been seen in these waters. Sutherland (1952: 26) has recorded the finding of a dead petrel on December 22, 1951, on the Brothers Island, considered by Mr. R. H. D. Stidolph "almost certainly to have been a Cook's petrel." Hence the origin of Schauinsland's specimens and their association with the Tuatara seem questionable. Schauinsland (1898: 701; 1899: 310) has given a surprising list of species of petrel which he found on Stephens and Trio Islands associated with the Tuatara: "*Oestrelata Cookii* . . . *Puffinus gavius* . . . *Majaqueus Parkensoni* und *Gouldi*." Falla (1934: 254) has pointed out something of the difficulty of identification of certain petrels, with special reference to *Puffinus carneipes*, *Pterodroma macroptera* and *Procellaria parkinsoni*, and, with this in mind, the list given by Schauinsland may not be so surprising if we consider that he was visiting the Cook Strait islands primarily as a herpetologist and not as an ornithologist. Again, since Buller (1899: 32) has recorded having received a pair of Tasmanian Muttonbirds (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) from Stephens Island, it appears likely that there have been a number of misidentifications including some of those on display in Bremen, but such skins as are available will have to be fully reported on before the possibility can be ruled out of the previous existence of these species as breeding birds on the Cook Strait islands.

Pterodroma hypoleuca nigripennis.

There is a specimen of the Black-winged Petrel on display, reputedly collected on Stephens Island in "1896/97." Only one record exists of its occurrence on the New Zealand mainland, that of a "sand-dried body" picked up at Waikanae on March 20, 1954, which "had probably been on the beach a week or more before it was found." (Fleming, 1954: 20). It is possible that this record from Stephens Island is a case of muddling of labels in the vast amount of material collected during Schauinsland's Pacific voyage. The only other skin in the Bremen Museum is from the Kermadecs, acquired in 1904. Hence, if not from Stephens Island, this specimen of a petrel from the Kermadecs is still of interest if it came from anywhere in the New Zealand region south of the Three Kings' Islands.

Pelecanoides urinatrix.

There is a female Diving Petrel, labelled as *P. u. urinatrix*, from Stephens Island, as well as two other specimens labelled as *P. u. exsul* also from Stephens Island. The *Checklist* (1953: 27) lists the former subspecies as "Breeding . . . The Brothers and Trio Islands (Cook Strait) . . ." and the latter as "Breeding Auckland and Antipodes Islands . . ." Oliver (1955: 95) includes Stephens Island also as a breeding place of *P. u. urinatrix*, but Mr. J. C. Yaldwyn (*in litt.*) has noted ". . . not on Stephens, immensely common on Trios and abundant on Brothers." It was not possible, in the time at our disposal, to be sure that *P. u. exsul* was, in fact, certainly represented, but it may be said that, at the time of Schauinsland's visit, one form, at least, of Diving

Petrel was sufficiently common on Stephens Island for specimens to be taken.

Phalacrocorax carunculatus carunculatus.

In the collection are skins of a juvenile male and an adult female King Shag collected on the Trio Islands on December 24, 1896. Rocks near Trio Island are one of the few breeding places of this rare and impressive shag at the present day.

Egretta sacra sacra.

A skin of a male Blue Heron from French Pass, collected on December 3, 1896, is in the collection. This species still seems to occur commonly in this region.

Anas superciliosa superciliosa.

A skin of a Grey Duck from D'Urville Island is mounted in the collection.

Aythya novaeseelandiae.

There are three skins of the Black Teal from D'Urville Islands; more recent records do not seem to exist.

Circus approximans gouldi.

The Australasian Harrier is represented by a skin of a juvenile male from Trio Island collected on December 24, 1896. This is still a common bird in the Cook Strait area.

Falco novaeseelandiae.

There is a skin of the New Zealand Falcon from Stephens Island in the collection. Oliver (1955: 425) gave "D'Urville Island" as a locality for this species, but there appear to be no records recently from the other adjacent islands.

Rallus philippensis assimilis.

Two male skins of the New Zealand Banded Rail, from Stephens Island, collected on January 1, 1897, are in the collection. These skins, like that of the Falcon, are a reminder of the former widespread distribution of the species since no records appear to be known from this locality.

Gallirallus australis australis.

Three mounted Wekas from D'Urville Island are in the collection. These birds, a juvenile unsexed, a juvenile female and an adult female, are all the usual chestnut phase of the South Island Weka. The adult female is almost identical in colouring and size, except for a slightly greyer abdomen, with a Weka from Canterbury sent, as *G. australis*, by Von Haast to Finsch at Bremen in 1871, and with a specimen from Mt. Cook, obtained in 1852.

Haematopus unicolor unicolor.

Four specimens of the Black Oystercatcher, including an adult male from French Pass, December 26, 1896, two adult female from French Pass, December 20, 1896, and one juvenile from Stephens Island, are in the collection.

Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus.

There are skins of two males and two females of the Red-billed Gull from Stephens Island in the collection.

Sterna striata.

One skin of the White-fronted Tern from Stephens Island is present.

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae.

There is present one mounted Bush Pigeon from D'Urville Island. Oliver (1955: 441) listed the species from the Chetwode Islands in Cook Strait, but no other recent records seem to be available for this region.

Nestor meridionalis meridionalis.

Two mounted birds, male and female, from Stephens Island are present. These are "typical" South Island Kakas. This species, like the Bush Pigeon, has not been recently recorded from the Cook Strait islands, apart from Oliver's (1955: 550) record of the Chetwode Islands.

Cyanoramphus auriceps auriceps.

One mounted skin of the Yellow-crowned Parakeet, from Stephens Island, collected on January 1, 1897, is in the collection. There seem to be no recent records of this now very restricted species from the Cook Strait islands.

Chalcites lucidus lucidus.

Schauinsland collected two specimens of the Shining Cuckoo, one in Wellington and the other on Stephens Island. Recent records are not available, except for an isolated occurrence at the Brothers Island (Sutherland, 1952: 26).

Eudynamis taitensis.

Two specimens of the Long-tailed Cuckoo, from Stephens Island, are in the collection. There seem to be no recent records from the Cook Strait islands. Apart from the probable lack of observers, this may perhaps be correlated with a lack of small passerines which this species, as well as the Shining Cuckoo, would be likely to parasitize.

Ninox novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae.

Two specimens of the Morepork from French Pass, and one from Stephens Island, are present. This owl still appears to frequent this region.

Halcyon sancta vagans.

There are two Kingfishers from Stephens Island, and two from Wellington, collected by Schauinsland.

Finschia novaeseelandiae.

According to Duncker (1953: 236), two specimens collected by Schauinsland on D'Urville Island on February 28, 1896, formerly existed in the Bremen collection. No recent records seem to be known.

Anthornis melanura melanura.

One male Bellbird from French Pass, collected on December 20, 1896, is present.

Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae.

The Tui is represented by four females collected on December 28, 1896, and one male, collected on December 31, 1896, on D'Urville Island. Another male is catalogued, but it seems to have been destroyed during the war.

Zosterops lateralis.

One skin of a male White-eye from French Pass is catalogued, but this, and some other White-eyes presented by Finsch in 1878, could not be found and were perhaps destroyed during the bombing of the museum.

C. A. Fleming (1957: 34) has recently summarised the significance of the distribution of the species of sea birds breeding on the Cook Strait islands, and further studies along these lines are in progress. However, the present interest of the Cook Strait birds represented in the Schauinsland Collection lies in their relation to the ecological changes which have taken place in this area during the past 60 years.

Two years after Schauinsland's visit, another German museum director, Dr. G. Thilenius, from Hamburg, visited Stephens Island to collect Tuatara material. K. P. Schmidt (1925: 5) has given a free translation of the remarks made by Thilenius (1899: 248), after his stay of about a month on Stephens Island, concerning the vegetation there at that time, sixty years ago. Thilenius found a ten-foot cover over the island of "Nikau palms, a creeping *Pandanus*, and various species of *Coprosma*, which last make up the greater part of the 'Bush.'" As Schmidt has pointed out, from his own visits in 1949, "The interest of this description lies in the radical contrast of the present-day vegetation of the island, in which the *Coprosma* thicket has all but disappeared evidently as a result of grazing by sheep." The American herpetologist, the late Professor Frank N. Blanchard, visited the Cook Strait Islands, with his family, in 1927 during his sabbatical leave from the University of Michigan. An entertaining and well-illustrated account of their experiences was later given by his wife, Dr. F. C. Blanchard, now of the University of Michigan Botanic Gardens; and her photographs of Stephens island, particularly those on pages 654 and 659 of her article, give some idea of the vegetation present then. She said of "this brush-grown island": "The upper part . . . is mostly covered with coarse grass and boulders. . . A few patches of the original bush, consisting of small stunted trees shaped by the wind, still are left." (Blanchard, 1935: 657). The late Dr. W. R. B. Oliver (1944) also remarked on the state of the vegetation of D'Urville and of Stephens Island, at a time five years before the visit of the Blanchards and only about 25 years after the visits of the German scientists. Of Stephens Island Oliver (1944: 206) said: "Only small patches of the original forest and scrub were left . . . when I visited it in January, 1922, and except for a fenced-off area near the lighthouse, these were over-run by cattle and sheep."

While information for a more detailed comparison of past and present aspects of this region is not, at the moment, available, it can be

said that, at least, the Schauinsland Collection provides a vivid reminder of the former condition of Stephens Island by the presence in it of such skins as those of Falcon, Banded Rail, Yellow-crowned Parrakeet, Kaka, and Morepork, birds which were no doubt a common feature of the bush there sixty-odd years ago.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity of thanking Dr. Helmuth O. Wagner, Director of the Ubersee-Museum at Bremen, for his very kind hospitality during our time in Bremen and for putting all the facilities of the Museum at our disposal, as well as for giving us copies of the relevant Schauinsland literature. We are indebted also to Dr. Hans Duncker, who made us very welcome at Bremen and greatly assisted our search for Schauinsland's material. We must thank, also, Dr. K.P. Schmidt, of Chicago, and Mr. J. C. Yaldwyn, of Wellington, for their comments on the Cook Strait islands.

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