

GRAY-HEADED MOLLYMAWK SWALLOWING PRION

On 23/8/60 we walked some miles of Muriwai Beach, because we had heard that a great variety of oceanic birds had been cast ashore during the previous week. As we removed the breastbone of a battered Gray-headed Mollymawk (*D. chrysostoma*), one of two which we handled, we were surprised to find in its belly a Broad-billed Prion (*P. vittata*), intact but for one wing, and easily recognisable. Though some of the species of prion had been wrecked in considerable numbers, only two other specimens of *P. vittata* were found. As far as we know, this type of predation has not been recorded in New Zealand before.

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— P. D. G. SKEGG, M. J. HOGG, N. J. LEDGARD

[Buller (1888, 198) found the bill and feathers of a diving petrel in the stomach of a Black-browed Mollymawk (*D. melanophris*) cast ashore during a gale at the Auckland Islands. Matthews (1929, Discovery Reports I) reports that the food and habits of Gray-headed and Black-browed Mollymawks at South Georgia are so similar that one description answers for both. Murphy (Oceanic Birds of South America I, 517) mentions that both species would come into the Bay of Isles, South Georgia, in stormy weather to feed upon blubber and refuse; and in discussing the varied diet of *melanophris*, he comments: "My experience with Tubinares in the field leads me to believe that many of the larger forms will attack and devour any bird encountered disabled on the water."—Ed.]

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ANOTHER AUSTRALIAN BARN-OWL IN WESTLAND

At approximately 10 p.m. on 15/8/60, I received a telephone call from Mr. A. Flannagan of Greymouth. He wanted the address of a taxidermist who could prepare a Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) for him. I thought that this was an unusual request to be made in connection with a Little Owl, and asked him for a description of the owl. I was soon on my way to see the bird that Mr. Flannagan had found in an unused house at Runanga on Friday, 12th August. He had formed the opinion that the owl flew inside the house through a broken window but had struck a pane of glass on its attempted way out. Apparently the neck had been broken. Because of its striking colouring, Mr. Flannagan had kept the owl and fortunately put it in his refrigerator. I identified the owl as an Australian Barn Owl (*Tyto alba delicatula*). Next day this well-preserved specimen was sent to the Canterbury Museum with the request that it be displayed if possible at the West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika.

Mr. E. G. Turbott kindly supplied me with the measurements but the sex will not be known until taxidermy work is carried out in a month or so. Measurements in millimetres:

Bill 20; Wing 285; Tail 115; Tarsus 66; Middle toe 46.

The only other records of this owl in New Zealand have come from the West Coast, South Island, and are as follows:—

1. Adult female shot at Barrytown, Westland, 16/8/47 (Oliver, p. 432).
2. One killed by a car about one mile south of the Haast River mouth and one half-mile from the sea in October or November, 1955 (*Notornis* VII, 208).

— P. GRANT