

## A NOTE ON THE EARLY SPECIMENS OF THE TAKAHE

The first specimen of *Notornis hochstetteri* obtained at Dusky Sound in 1849, is described as caught by dogs, kept alive on a sealer for some days, then killed and eaten by the crew. The skin later obtained by Dr. Mantell's son was exhibited at the Zoological Society, London. I have examined this specimen, now in the British Museum, and feel certain that it had fairly expert handling when first obtained, by someone competent as a bird skinner; also some preservative better than salt (used for sealskins) or just drying, almost certainly was used. If this specimen was killed by sealers and later eaten it is certain that any remains of skin, legs and beak would have been in a condition of very poor preservation, quite useless for a mounted specimen. In view of the present condition of this specimen, it seems certain that it was obtained by a competent collector and preserver of bird specimens.

The second specimen is recorded as obtained by a Maori at Deas Cove, Thomson Sound, in 1851. This specimen, now in the Dominion Museum, must have also received expert attention on the spot soon after it was killed.

The third specimen taken in 1879 near the south end of Lake Te Anau, is recorded as being carefully skinned and preserved by a station manager. This may be so, but in my experience the average farmer of to-day would be quite at a loss if faced with the problem of skinning and preserving a bird.

The fourth specimen obtained in 1898 received expert attention. No one tried to skin it, but it was carried by rowing boat twenty-five miles to the south end of Lake Te Anau, and then by coach and rail to Dunedin, where it fortunately arrived in a state to enable Mr. Jennings, taxidermist at the Otago Museum, to make a fine job of preserving and mounting it.

The account of the preservation of the 1898 specimen is undoubtedly true, but I feel certain that a serious doubt exists as to the exact facts about the circumstances of collection of the first three specimens.

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## ARCTIC TERNS NEAR MANUKAU HEADS

Four Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisica*) were seen perched on the rail of the jetty at Little Huia, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Whatipu on the northern shore of Manukau Harbour, on the afternoon of 22/3/61 about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours before full tide. The birds allowed a fairly close approach and were observed for some time through 10 x 50 binoculars. They eventually flew across the harbour, low over the water with rather slow regular wing beats.

The general impression was of long bodied terns, smaller than *S. striata* and with shorter legs and smaller bill. They appeared to be adults in winter plumage, and closely resembled the illustration of adult female winter, plate 129, The Handbook of British Birds, Vol. V. The forehead and fore-crown were white, back of crown and nape black (one bird appeared to have some very fine whitish markings on the black part of the crown); upper plumage below the neck grey, folded primaries darker grey, and a suggestion of white tips on the secondaries; rump and tail, seen when the birds flew, were white, the tail deeply forked but the streamers not greatly elongated; whole underparts white. All had black bills; legs and feet blackish, one bird with a tinge of deep crimson on the tarsus.

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