 Notornis, 2005, Vol. 52, Part 2: 120-121
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SHORT NOTE

Longevity record for Snares Island snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica huegeli*)

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Ninety-three Snares Island snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica huegeli*) were each fitted with a unique colour-band combination in a 7.5 ha study area on North East Island, Snares Islands (48°02'S, 166°36'E), between 1982 and 1987 (Miskelly 1999a). By October 2000, only one of these banded birds ("BR-M", a female) was known to be alive (Miskelly *et al*. 2001). She lived near the research station on Station Point, and continued to be seen during most visits to Snares Islands over the ensuing three years (PMS pers. obs.). She was last seen (by PMS) on 6 March 2004, despite visits being made to the island during 20-29 July 2004 and 17 February-12 March 2005.

The area where BR-M was known to have lived was also thoroughly searched during a translocation of 30 Snares Island snipe from North East Island to Putauhinu Island (off the south-west coast of Stewart Island) during 10-16 April 2005 (CMM was one of the capture team). Twenty-five adult snipe were caught in the former snipe study area, which was the main area targeted for catching. At least nine further adult snipe were seen but not captured in the study area. No banded snipe was encountered. We assume that BR-M had died, as adult Snares Island snipe are highly faithful to their territories; adult females were always found in the same territory or the adjacent one in subsequent years (Miskelly 1999a).

BR-M was first captured on 23 Nov. 1987, and was recorded as being in pre-alternate moult (CMM pers. obs.). She was assumed to have been a one-year-old (i.e. a chick from the 1986/87 breeding season), as this is the only age class of snipe known to moult in November (CMM unpubl.). Peak hatching for Snares Island snipe occurs in February (Miskelly 1999b), and so BR-M was likely to have been just over 17 years old in March 2004. Her minimum age would have been 16 years 10 months, as the latest known lay date for a Snares Island snipe is 13 April (CMM unpubl.), which gives an estimated hatch date of 5 or 8 May (based on egg interval of three days and incubation length of 22 days; Miskelly 1990). The previous longevity record for a *Coenocorypha* snipe was 15+ years (Miskelly *et al*. 2001).

There are few published longevity records for other species of snipe. The oldest bird that we know of was a common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) found dead at a minimum age of 18 years 3 months; this was one of over 30,000 common snipe banded in Britain and Ireland up to 1991 (Mead & Clark 1993; Staav 1998).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The April 2005 Snares Island snipe transfer was organised by Pete McClelland (Southland Conservancy, Department of Conservation) and Matt Charteris. CMM thanks Matt Charteris, Rosalind Cole, Phred Dobbins, Andrea Goodman and Malcolm Mackenzie for their assistance with catching, handling and caring for snipe. This note was improved by comments received from Phil Battley.\

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Keywords longevity; survival; New Zealand snipe; *Coenocorypha aucklandica*; Snares Islands

Received 29 April 2005; accepted 29 April 2005
Editor M.Williams