

Blue Penguin attacked by fur seal

On Stephens Island (Marlborough Sounds) at noon on 3 November 1981, the principal lighthouse keeper, G. Schroder, drew my attention to a commotion in the sea about 5 metres from shore. We saw that an adult fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) had captured a Blue Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*).

Having been attacked from behind, the penguin was immobilised and had a large wound across its back. The seal, perhaps disturbed by our presence, abandoned the penguin to make a shallow dive, and, returning to the surface, snatched the penguin and dived again with it.

This observation confirms the suggestion of Stonehouse (1975, *The biology of penguins*, Macmillan) that "... adults of this species, like others in New Zealand waters, would be taken by fur seals and sharks ..."

Other evidence of fur seals taking penguins has been recorded by Sorensen (1969) in *Fish. Tech. Rep. NZ Mar. Dep.* 39:1-35.

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Barn Owls transported by aircraft — a postscript

In an earlier note (Gill & Turbott 1984, *Notornis* 31: 177-179) we reported a live Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) of Australian origin at Flat Bush near Auckland International Airport. The owl's fat condition, with some food still in the gut 18 hours after discovery, argued against the bird having flown to New Zealand. It seemed just possible that the owl had arrived in the undercarriage bay of an international jet airliner.

This supposition is strengthened by a subsequent event. At about 0800 h on 12 March 1985, airport staff found the partly mangled remains of a bird in the undercarriage bay of a McDonnell-Douglas DC-10 (Continental Airlines flight CO1) newly arrived from Los Angeles via Honolulu. One of us (BJG) identified the bird as a Barn Owl. The head and one wing were undamaged. A rodent's tail protruded from the mangled thorax. Barn Owls are resident in California (Peterson, R. T. 1961, *A field guide to western birds*) and introduced to Hawaii (Berger, A.J. 1972. *Hawaiian birdlife*) where it is uncommon. The aeroplane was present at both ports during darkness.

This establishes that Barn Owls can be accidentally transported to New Zealand by jet aircraft. In this case the bird was crushed, presumably by the undercarriage mechanism, but this may not always happen, particularly in Boeing 747 aircraft, which have larger undercarriage bays.

It seems very likely that the 1983 Barn Owl at Flat Bush was not the fourth vagrant of this species to be reported in New Zealand but was an accidental stowaway on an aircraft.

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