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## SHORT NOTE

### T. R. Hacket and the Okarito kiwis

Thomas Ridge Hacket (c.1830-1884) was the son of Dr Thomas and Amelia Hacket. He had experience as a mining engineer in England and Europe before migrating to New Zealand, arriving in October 1857. His brother James Henry and his sisters Harriet and Mary Elizabeth joined him in Nelson, where he was employed as manager of the Dun Mountain Company's copper mine. He lost his job when the company went broke, but he remained in Nelson and showed Hochstetter over the workings in 1859. Dr (later Sir) David Monro wrote of "young Hacket" at that time; he was about 29 years old. In 1860 he joined the surveyor John Rochfort on an expedition to the mouth of the Buller River, thence overland to the Grey, inspecting the coal outcrops there. Rochfort married Elizabeth Hacket in 1863, but she died in 1864.

Hacket turned up next (1863) at Oamaru, meeting Dr James Hector and getting a job as assistant geologist in the Geological Survey of Otago, with R. B. Gore, clerk and meteorologist, J. Buchanan, draughtsman and botanist, and William Skey, laboratory assistant, as his colleagues. From Queenstown in 1864 he did the first climb of Double Cone on the Remarkables and sounded Lake Wakatipu. At the Dunedin Exhibition in 1865 Hacket served as a Juror for nine classes of exhibits of varying descriptions: gold ores, chemical substances and products, vegetable

substances, railway plant, locomotives and carriages, manufacturing machines and tools, machinery in general, agricultural instruments, metal manufactures and general hardware, cutlery and edge tools. He was awarded a silver medal for "his merit as the first person to draw attention to the commercial value of the discovery of chrome ore in New Zealand" and his "zealous services" generally to the exhibition. He had brought to notice the Dun Mountain chrome ore and had opened up a mine in Aniseed Valley in 1861; chrome specimens were exhibited by "Messrs Levien and Hacket".

When Hector moved to Wellington in 1865 to found the Colonial Museum and Geological Survey, he employed Hacket as a field assistant, first in southeast Otago, then in northwest Nelson (1866) and later (1867) on the West Coast. Eventually Hacket worked on the Okarito district, writing an account of its geology that Hector published in 1869, after Hacket had left for Australia.

During his Okarito stay, Hacket corresponded with his boss, Hector, on a variety of topics (and occasionally wrote to Gore to ensure action in case Hector was absent). These letters, now in the Hocken Library, University of Otago, are well written, in a clear handwriting, and have an attractive informal style. He addressed Hector confidently as "My dear Hector" and signed the letters "Believe me, Yours sincerely" or "very sincerely, T. R. Hacket". They were obviously on friendly terms. Hector appreciated Hacket's confident ability and tolerated his cheeky familiarity. Hector had apparently asked him to collect kiwis and roas (referred to as "Rohis") for the new Colonial Museum. The extracts that follow document one side of their correspondence on this subject.

My dear Hector,

Okarito, 1 August 1867

Yours of 8th July duly received . . . I hope you have written me about the kiwis, viz Do you want live ones, skeletons, or skins? . . .

Okarito 28 Sept. '67: I wrote you by last mail enclosing Geol. Report and Section. Today I succeeded in securing one of the Rohis and the Egg of which I before wrote you. The Egg will be sent by the post with this in a coffee tin, the bird will go up by the S.S. Bruce to Hokitika to be forwarded, and it is to be hoped that better luck will attend it than the last one sent. It is a fine creature in beautiful condition and eats worms most ravenously. Having kept alive for so many weeks it is to be presumed that he will still thrive in captivity, especially with so good an appetite. Price £3 for the bird and Egg . . .

Remember me to Gore, Skeay and Buchanan . . .

P.S. I have spoken to some people about the Greebbs (*sic*) and am promised some skins.

Okarito 9 Oct. (1867): . . . I have not heard from you for a long time tho' I am very anxious about the Rohi and your opinion of my description of the district . . .

Yours very sincerely, T. R. Hacket

My dear Gore,

Hokitika, 1 Nov '67

I forwarded a few days back 2 skins of the Rohi addressed to the Dr . . . Should he not be in Wellington I would advise you to get them prepared and stuffed at once by your birdstuffer as they may else spoil - They are very valuable from their peculiarities and scarcity.

I hope the Egg arrived safely . . .

Awaiting your kind reply believe me, Yours very sincerely,

T. R. Hackett

My dear Gore,

Hokitika 24 Nov '67

Yours of 3rd duly recd. in which you tell me that the Egg arrived so I presume that you got it unbroken about which I was anxious. You say the kiwi skin arrived but you do not say how many. There should be 3 of them.

I am obliged to you for putting down my name for the N.Z. Society and now enclose £1.1 as my subscription . . .

Yours very sincerely, T. R. Hackett

My dear Hector,

Hokitika 30 Nov '67

I was rather disappointed with your last of 27 Oct as it only answered mine about the Coal, but for this information my best thanks . . .

As regards my ac/. against you I hardly like charging you with kiwis or Rows which either escaped or died on the road besides which Gore only acknowledged a *skin* instead of 3 skins.

However, I enclose the total and you may pass which items you please.

The private ac/. against you I find by my book to be £1.8 . . .

You promised me £10 for reporting on the Wellington Wairarapa with 63 specimens . . . Believe me, Yours very sincerely,

T. R. Hackett

The following account accompanied this letter:

N.Z. Museum. Dr to J. R. Hackett

Sept. 1867	1 kiwi skin forwarded		10
	1 Live kiwi, died	£1	
	1 Live Rohi and egg (Tizard)		
	(Egg and skin forwarded)	£2	10
	Skinning and preparing do.		10
	1 Rohi skin (paid Cooper)		
	forwarded,		10
	carriage & freight, 1 box s.b. and of		
	1 Rohi		10
	1 Live Rohi, Escaped at Hokitika	£1	15
	Total	£7	<u>5</u>

Note added by Gore in Wellington:

"Doctor. The only things that arrived at the Museum were

Kiwi's Egg

do. Skull and bones

3 skins, two of which were rotten (*sic*)

and had to be buried: the other was set up.

R. B. Gore 21.12.67."

Here the record ended because Hackett sailed from Hokitika to Melbourne in January 1868 "to try my luck", as he wrote, "with the Buller mine"; he was trying to raise capital for his venture. He stayed in Australia for a decade, continuing his correspondence with Hector.

From Hacket's letters, it seems that he knew two species of *Apteryx* in the Okarito district, one as the kiwi, which has remained as a general term for the genus but probably referred to the South Island Brown Kiwi, and the other as the Roa (or Rohi). According to Oliver (1930, *New Zealand Birds*, p.60), stories about a large kiwi or roaroa were current before 1871. Buller, in his first paper (1865, *Essay on the Ornithology of New Zealand*), quoted Rochfort as describing the Roaroa as "a kiwi about the size of a turkey" under the name *Apteryx maxima*. This manuscript name, attributed to Verreaux, cited by Bonaparte, has since been dismissed as a *nomen nudum*, because it was published without a description or indication. In the *Catalogue of the Colonial Museum, Wellington* (1870), Hector listed "*Apteryx australis* Shaw. Great Kiwi, Tokoeka; *A. Oweni* Gould. Grey Kiwi; and *A. Mantelli* Bartl. Common brown Kiwi", adding "? *Apteryx Maxima* Verr." in italics, indicating that it was among the Museum's desiderata.

Haast claimed to have heard the loud call of the Roa in the Alps, but it was not until the summer of 1870-71 that Canterbury Museum received two specimens from a collector in Westland (perhaps W. Bills, who later provided Buller with a series). The first two specimens were named *Apteryx haastii* by T. H. Potts (*Trans. NZ Inst.* 4: 204-5) in a paper to the Philosophical Society of Canterbury on 2 August 1871. The first was collected "high on the ranges" and the second "probably from the ranges above Okarita" (*sic*). Hutton's *Catalogue of the Birds of New Zealand*, issued in late 1871 (after September, when the Introduction was written), lists ?*Apteryx maxima* Verreaux as the Roa-roa, based on the Canterbury Museum material, and his critical notes (p.76) described the tarsus and foot of a giant specimen from the Aorere headwaters, Nelson. Apparently the single surviving Hacket skin was *A. australis*.

It thus seems that T. R. Hacket in 1867 obtained *Apteryx haastii* Potts about 3 years before Canterbury Museum received the type specimens, but that his efforts were frustrated by his own lack of elementary taxidermic skill and by the inadequacies of coastal shipping services in the 1860s. Hector had collected Crested Grebes during his Otago explorations, but Hacket left for Australia before he could obtain grebes of any species in Westland.

The Okarito kiwis appear to have been Hacket's only contribution to ornithology, to judge from his later letters to Hector (in the National Museum, Wellington) reporting on his activities as a mine surveyor and goldfield commissioner and passing on news about Australian geologists. Some of his Australian letters are summarised elsewhere (Fleming, in press: *Aust. J. Earth Sciences*). He returned to Nelson late in 1878 and tried to develop a copper-chrome prospect on land he owned in Aniseed Valley. He remained a bachelor and died in Nelson in 1884.

I am grateful to Mrs Helen Lewis, Nelson (through Miss Nancy Adams, Wellington), for information on the Hacket family and to the Hocken Library for permission to quote extracts from Hacket's letters in the Hector Papers (MS 443), Hocken Library, Dunedin. Details of Hacket's part in the 1865 Dunedin Exhibition are from "Reports and awards of the jurors", printed for the Commissioners, Dunedin, 1865.