

I am grateful to S. Jones and Prof. J. E. Morton for organising the visit to Little Barrier, to the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Parks Board for permission, to J. L. Craig and R. Hay for comments and discussion, to B. D. Heather for help with the text, and to the Department of Zoology, University of Auckland, for funding.

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- IAN G. McLEAN, *Department of Zoology, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland*



## ADDITIONS TO THE BIRDLIFE OF NIUE

Recently my friend Don Morrison of Alexandra spent nearly 2 years (March 1979 to December 1980) on Niue. During that time he made regular observations of the birdlife, using Wodzicki's (1971) paper as reference. I had also given him some notes and sketches for other likely visitants, especially waders. Unfortunately Kinsky & Yaldwyn's (1981) comprehensive booklet was not then available. I have compiled the following summary from Don's written and oral notes.

One heron and two waders (listed below) are new records, and the presence of a Reef Heron (listed by Kinsky & Yaldwyn as "unconfirmed") was established. One of the waders was not positively identified, so that we could now say the Niue bird-list is 28 species, with three more unconfirmed; this last group consists of a duck, a calidrine wader and the Red-tailed Tropicbird.

These additional notes should be read in conjunction with Wodzicki's extensive paper and the Kinsky & Yaldwyn booklet. Place names are shown on Wodzicki's map. Status for individual species agrees with Kinsky & Yaldwyn, except where otherwise commented upon.

GREATER FRIGATE BIRD *Fregata minor*

25/9/79: Two adults soaring over Tapeu hill in the evening.  
 23/2/80: One adult soared out of sight.

BANDED RAIL *Rallus philippensis goodsoni*

Wodzicki mentioned a mid-winter breeding season in 1969. Kinsky & Yaldwyn suggest that breeding appears to extend throughout the year. DM recorded chicks from mid-March through to late September in 1980.

**BLUE-CROWNED LORY** *Vini australis*

On 18/8/79 a flock of 6-12 were feeding on nectar on a red trumpet-flowered tree, giving the characteristic high-pitched screech. They were not seen again, and the locals believe them to be in decline. One school pupil maintained that they were previously caught to use some of the feathers for fishing lures.

**LONG-TAILED NZ CUCKOO** *Eudynamys taitensis*

29/7/79: One seen in a roadside tree, the only positive sighting in nearly 2 years.

**BARN OWL** *Tyto alba lulu*

More common than Wodzicki indicated; quite often seen in early mornings and evenings; also DM frequently saw these birds after dark when he was travelling around the island road by push-bike.

As Wodzicki suggested, the locals are very superstitious about the owl — it is often “associated with stories about death.” A wing taken to the High School by a New Zealand biology teacher was not welcomed by the students.

**WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET** *Collocalia spodiopygia*

28/8/79: Nests in caves at Avaiki (near Makefu) contained young. 14/11/79: In the same caves, nests contained both eggs and young. They appear to breed throughout the year.

In caves at Ulupaka (near Lakepa) nesting was in total darkness, and adults appeared to use some sort of (partly audible) “sonar” for orientation, detection of walls, etc. This did not seem to be effective on the human body, since they frequently bumped into the visitor.

**REEF HERON** *Egretta sacra*

Unconfirmed reports up to 1971 are mentioned in Kinsky & Yaldwyn. DM said that he did not obtain a vernacular name as the bird was said to be previously unknown; *motuku* listed by Kinsky & Yaldwyn is the most likely one, agreeing with similar words in other Polynesian languages. The name *kiu tahi* also listed by Kinsky & Yaldwyn is more correctly reserved for the Wandering Tattler, which is well known locally. A more liberal interpretation of *kiu tahi* than Kinsky & Yaldwyn's ‘shore-bird’ (p. 25) would be ‘shore-plover,’ *kiu* being the local name for the common and well-known Golden Plover, and *tahi* referring to the more coastal habitats of the tattler compared with the plover.

7/4/79: One grey-phase bird beside a road 1 km inland; it flew off lazily into a coconut plantation where cattle grazed. 14/7/79: One on a coastal headland at Utako (Alofi) at high tide; it flew off low to the south. 6/10/79: One near the Japanese wreck on the east coast north of Hakupu; later, it landed on the wreck. 20/10/79: One at the same place.

All sightings were believed to have been of the same bird. There was a hurricane on 11/12/79. No sightings were made in the whole of 1980.

**WHITE-FACED HERON** *Ardea novaehollandiae*

25/4/80: One adult first seen on a tidal cliff-edge, at a point where a lot of young sea-snakes were in the tidal pools. 26/4/80: Feeding on locusts on the hotel lawn (Alofi Bay). 18/5/80: Standing on a coastal rock at Utako (Alofi). 30/5/80: Feeding on the reef at low tide. (This bird was not seen again.) This is a new species for Niue.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis fulva*

The greatest daily tally was 116 on the airport apron on 4/11/79. On 8/3/80, the change into breeding plumage was noted. From 12/10/80, numbers began to increase on the airport runway as the southern migration developed.

**BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW** *Numenius tahitiensis*

The vernacular name is *kiu-vouvou*; Wodzicki's *motuku*, which appears to have been copied by Kinsky & Yaldwyn without comment, was not known; it is more correctly reserved for the Reef Heron.

Small numbers, mostly singletons, were recorded from early October to mid-March, the largest group being of four on the airport runway on 14/10/79.

**WANDERING TATTLER** *Tringa incana*

Contrary to Wodzicki's assessment, the Wandering Tattler was considered common, especially on the low-tide reef, cliff ledges, grassy airport verges and the golf course; e.g. on 4/11/79, 21 were recorded on the airport alone. Some were present all the year round.

No positive identification was made of the Siberian Tattler (*T. brevipes*).

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

Wodzicki did not list the Turnstone; DM recorded somewhat larger numbers than Kinsky & Yaldwyn implied, but it could hardly be described as common.

On 8/9/79 the first Turnstone was noticed with a flock of seven Golden Plover on the low-tide reef. Numbers increased but remained small, the biggest groups recorded being each of ten birds on 25/11/79 and 15/12/79.

Kinsky & Yaldwyn indicated that over-wintering by this species was an unsolved question, but DM reported small numbers still present for June, July and August of 1980.

**SANDERLING** *Crocethia alba*

4/12/79 and 5/12/79: One was seen on each day at lunch time, feeding on the reef near the wharf. On 19/10/80, one was recorded on the runway. This is a new wader record for Niue.

SANDPIPER sp. (? *Calidris* sp.)

On 4/11/79, four small sandpiper-like birds appeared on the airport verge. (Field notes submitted to me suggest the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, *C. acuminata*.) One, two, or three individuals were recorded on grassy areas (airport or golf course) until mid-March, and again in October and November 1980. They sometimes associated with Turnstones, but on at least two occasions Golden Plovers chased them off. This is consistent with interspecific aggressive behaviour between these two species, which I have seen in the Gilbert Islands (Child 1960).

This is a probable new wader record for Niue.

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PETER CHILD, 10 Royal Terrace, Alexandra



## REVIEWS

*Handbuch der Vogel Mitteleuropas (Textbook of Birds of Central Europe)*. Herausgegeben von Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim — Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim, Editor. Vol. 9. Pigeons to Woodpeckers. Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Wiesbaden, 1980. 1148 pp.

This monumental volume (1148 pages) describes pigeons, cuckoos, owls, night swallows, swifts, kingfishers, bee-eaters, the hoopoe family and woodpeckers.

The treatment of every family is impressive. For instance, the description of *Columba livia* or domestic pigeon begins with an account of its field appearance, preceded by a key to species of pigeons found in Central Europe and a page of references. Then follow accounts of moult, calls (with some diagrams), a description of the pigeon's nesting area, populations, reproduction and its results, behaviour (with line diagrams) and food. Every species gets the same treatment to the effect that the book contains a wealth of information, supported by the latest literature. Excellent black and white drawings illustrate differences between related species, show various bird species in flight, or show characteristic behaviour patterns. An index of scientific names and a brief index of German and English names of birds conclude this volume. The latter is unfortunately incomplete as no English names are given for a number of species.

The textbook lists two bird species which are on the New Zealand bird list: the domestic pigeon (*Columba livia*) and the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*). Both these species are introduced species. The perusal of the description and ecology of these two species in