

On 2 February 1963, at Lake Tuakitoto, South Otago, D. V. Merton and I saw a small neat dotterel, grey above, clean white below, which showed a faint reddish tinge on crown and nape and had sharply defined grey shoulder patches. Much smaller than nearby immature Banded Dotterels. We guessed it to be an immature female.

On 13 March 1966, a party consisting of D. V. Merton, Miss M. C. R. McIntyre, D. Bettesworth, R. Buskell, Miss S. Fogarty, and I saw at Miranda, Firth of Thames, a bird that was apparently a juvenile Red-capped. It was much smaller than the c.145 Banded Dotterel and single Mongolian Dotterel (*C. mongolus*) it was with. It was clean grey and white, with no trace of buff. Its face was conspicuously white, and its shoulder patches were disc-shaped, pointed, and clearly defined. On 25 February 1968 I saw another very small dotterel at Miranda that had a very fine bill, but no further description was taken. On 22 March 1968, R. B. Sibson (pers. comm.) saw a Red-capped Dotterel at Kidd's Bay, Karaka, feeding in a puddle with a stint and a Banded Dotterel. Its nape was rufous but not its crown. Its legs were black.

On 13 January 1970, I saw two birds among the Banded Dotterels at Karaka, Manukau Harbour. Both were small and with tiny bills compared with the Bandeds. One had a white face, a slightly rufous crown, and the typical well-defined part band or shoulder patch. The other was presumably a hybrid, rather slate-grey overall above, with no shoulder patch, but with a faint lower-breast band like that of many Banded Dotterels at this time of year.

On 11 February 1975 I noted one in a field with Banded Dotterels at Karaka, but a description was not kept.

To complete the record, on 7 December 1975 a single bird was seen at Karaka on the mud. It had no rufous markings (B. Brown 1976, *Notornis* 23 (4): 336).

One wonders whether these birds were stragglers from Australia or, among Banded Dotterels, from Canterbury.

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ACQUISITION OF A SPECIMEN OF THE NEW CALEDONIAN KAGU (CAGOU)

The Kagu, or Cagou (*Rhynochetos jubatus* Verreaux & Des Murs, 1860) is to New Caledonia what the kiwi is to New Zealand: a national emblem, endemic, at least partly nocturnal, almost flightless and a threatened species facing extinction as a result of reduction of its forest habitat and decimation by fire and introduced mammals since the arrival of European Man.

It is a kiwi-sized light blue-grey bird with a crude but prominent crest, strong beak and legs, and a piercing stare. Because of its small numbers, threatened status and occupation of montane forest areas,

its habits are poorly known. So are its relationships and origin. It is placed in a monotypic family and suborder within the Gruiformes and is thought to be most closely related to the tropical finfoots (Heliornithidae) and the sun bittern (Eurypygidae).

The Kagu has recently begun to warrant greater interest on the part of New Zealand ornithologists with the claim (Olson & Zusi, in Olson 1977) that our extinct *Aptornis* should be removed from the Rallidae and afforded a family of its own and that its closest affinity appears to be with *Rhynchoetos*. A full discussion of this opinion has not yet been published, but already it is gaining acceptance. Stevens (1980, p. 253, 308), for example, cites the kagu as a remnant of the original Gondwana fauna (although more advanced than the kiwi, moa and other such ratite remnants) with an affinity with *Aptornis* dating back "a very long time."

To permit direct osteological comparison and because no kagu skeleton was held in a New Zealand institution, an approach was made to the Chef du Service des Eaux et Forêts of the New Caledonian Direction Territoriale des Services Ruraux to obtain a skeleton. Some months later I was informed that a bird had died in captivity and that the skeleton would be despatched after necessary preparation and documentation. The specimen arrived in June 1980 and was found to be the complete carcass. Because of preservation in formalin the skin and plumage could not be saved during extraction of the skeleton, but the internal organs have been retained.

The skeleton has been disarticulated and cleaned and is lodged in the collections of the University of Auckland Geology Department under the acquisition number V13. The gut, heart and trachea have been placed in the keeping of the Auckland Institute and Museum and registered there as acquisition number AV1359.1. The remains are available for study and loan to interested workers.

The carcass was accompanied by an official "Fiche de Renseignements" which showed that the bird had been captured in August 1976 at about 9 months old and judged to be male because it "appears to have paired with female No. 23 which produced an egg in 1979." It was brought to the Noumea Parc Forestier in February 1980 and the same day "died perhaps of a broken heart at the departure of its owner." It would thus have been a little over four years old. At death it had an overall length of 53 cm, a wingspread of 77 cm and weighed 860 grams; other details are given on the information sheet.

LITERATURE CITED

- OLSON, S.L. 1977. A synopsis of the fossil Rallidae. In Ripley, S.D., *Rails of the world: a monograph of the Family Rallidae*. Boston, D. R. Goddard: 339-373.
STEVENS, G. R. 1980. *New Zealand adrift*. Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed. 442 pp.

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