

## Foreword

The first ornithological observations from the Auckland Islands were recorded in 1807, yet it has taken more than 212 years for the first ever comprehensive account of the birds to be produced.

*Lost Gold: ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands* marks a significant milestone in our understanding of the biota of the Auckland Islands.

Located 465 km south of New Zealand's South Island port of Bluff, they are the largest of New Zealand's subantarctic islands, with a combined area of 57,000 ha. Two of the larger islands in the group, Adams and Disappointment Islands, are among the least modified islands on Earth.

For 15 years I looked after the New Zealand subantarctic islands and led the recognition of their World Heritage status. From my early field work it was above all the incredible birdlife that infatuated me. The noisiest bellbirds I have ever experienced, in gnarled rātā forest; the chattering of the parakeets; the mysterious call of the light-mantled sooty albatross; and the fleeting glimpses of snipe.

These remote islands, set among the roughest oceans on Earth, are incredible treasure troves of some of the most unique wildlife to be found anywhere. On trips back from Antarctica by sea it was this abundant life that held one in awe of nature.

The Auckland Islands support eight endemic species or subspecies of birds and many more endemic invertebrates and plants. Surrounded by the Auckland Islands/Motu Maha Marine Reserve, they are one of the jewels in the crown of New Zealand's natural heritage.

Many surprises were uncovered in preparing this volume, including the addition of a new bird,

the Macquarie Island shag, to the New Zealand list, and the revelation that snipe had persisted undetected on Enderby and Rose Islands for more than 80 years.

To date, there has never been a comprehensive published account of the birds of the Auckland Islands – a gap that has been obvious to ornithologists for more than 60 years. The Department of Conservation's parent agencies, the Wildlife Service and the Department of Lands & Survey, along with the National Museum of New Zealand, undertook to produce such a publication in 1973. This collaboration between Birds New Zealand and Te Papa Press sees this long-held ambition finally come to fruition.

*Lost Gold* comprises 19 manuscripts contributed by 29 authors that include the leading experts on birds of the Auckland Islands. Previously unpublished information is summarised, including more than 4,800 bird observations by Second World War coastwatchers, and details of birds recorded by the 1874-75 German Transit of Venus Expedition.

As well as documenting the past and present birdlife of the Auckland Islands, this publication provides an important baseline for assessing changes resulting from the planned eradication of pigs, mice, and cats from the largest island in the group, Auckland Island. This book is a timely addition to our growing knowledge of this World Heritage Site as New Zealand embarks on one of the most ambitious island-restoration plans ever undertaken.

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