

differentiating between pale-faced Macaronis and normal Royals and between black-faced Royals and normal Macaronis, if the problems of age variation can be overcome. Of course this assumes that abnormal birds like the black-faced examples from Macquarie, are not really all stray Macaronis, as I thought when the 1963 photograph to which Falla *et al.* refer was published.

Incidentally the under-flipper pattern of the 1969 bird was carefully drawn from life. It was darker anteriorly than Rand's Figure 2 of a typical Macaroni (reference in Falla *et al.*) so that if this feature has any diagnostic value it does not help their case. Unfortunately no such sketch was made of the 1970 bird.

Finally it seems doubtful that the latter was yet another black-faced Royal. According to G. R. Wilson it had a flipper 194 mm long, a bill length of 58.2 mm, an extensive exposure of bare skin at the gape, and a lemon-yellow crest: the latter suggests that it was not fully adult and the dimensions fit either sub-species.

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The Editor,  
Sir,

## LEG AND FOOT COLOUR OF THE MARSH CRAKE

I read with much interest Dr K. E. Westerskov's article (Notornis 17: 324-330, 1970) on the leg and foot colour of the Marsh Crake (*Porzana pusilla*). According to the author the Marsh Crake has olive green legs and feet, irrespective of the subspecies, sex, age and season. This opinion is in contrast to much of the European ornithological literature.

The Marsh Crake is an occasional breeding bird in the Netherlands. From 11 June till 5 August 1971 at least 8 males of *Porzana pusilla intermedia* were holding territories in an inundated polder in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam. Four nests containing one or more eggs were found (Veling, Mededelingenblad KNNV VWG Amsterdam, 9e jaargang, nr. 3: 20, 1971). On 14 July I had the opportunity to study both male and female for about a quarter of an hour. I was in company of three experienced birdwatchers. After a careful examination of the leg colour we all concluded that both male and female had brownish-flesh-coloured legs (1). Three other males were observed in electric torch-light at very close quarters (about 1 metre).

All these birds had flesh-coloured legs and feet (de Roever, Hinloopen, pers. comm.) (2). Mr A. Hinloopen, a Dutch Marsh Crake-specialist, did never observe a *pusilla* with olive green legs and feet (pers. comm.). In this connection a colour photograph of *pusilla* taken by Jean Phillipe Varin (Birds of the World, Vol. 3, Part 4, No. 28: 773, 1969) is interesting. The flesh-colour of the left leg and foot is visible (3).

In my opinion the leg and foot colour of *pusilla* is variable. This colour may range from brownish-flesh (1, 2, 3) to olive green (Westerskov 1970). Further research will perhaps throw more light upon this variability and the factors which affect it.

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