

The Editor,
Sir,

BIRDS OF FIJI: PRESERVATION OF SPECIES OR SPECIMENS ?

I read with interest the item entitled "news from the Dominion Museum" in the June issue of *Notornis*, the first paragraph of which deals with the possibility of a joint Dominion Museum - Fiji Museum study of the Fijian avifauna involving the collecting of specimens and the formation of permanent study collections.

The importance of gaining an understanding of the "systematic status of the birds of Fiji, their variation from island to island and estimates of relative abundance," is not questioned, neither is the need to form a permanent study collection in the South West Pacific. The Dominion Museum is to be congratulated for taking the initiative in this as it is certainly in New Zealand's interest that its premier museum gains in significance and importance in this region.

However, it would be of interest to have more information about the proposals as it is a matter of concern that the possibility exists that rare or even extremely rare species may be sought and slaughtered in the name of science. Is this possibility real? Which is more important, the preservation of species or specimens? This is a problem which faces a number of biologists. Ideally it is to be hoped only relatively common species will be collected and that the rare species will be captured alive, used for breeding purposes, and eventually on death, be preserved in collections. Will members of this joint venture be advising the Fijian Government about reserves and other measures necessary for the preservation of the rarer species?

G. W. RAMSAY

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Nelson
26 July 1972

The Director of the Dominion Museum (Dr R. K. Dell), to whom this letter was referred, replies as follows:—

The Editor,
Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity of replying to the letter from Dr G. W. Ramsay on the proposed Dominion Museum - Fiji Museum joint study of the birds of Fiji.

Since the publication of the news item mentioned, a formal agreement between the Dominion Museum and two organisations of the Government of Fiji has been signed covering the conditions under which this joint project is to be carried out. The Fijian organisations involved are the Fiji Museum and the Government's environmental and biological conservation authority, the National Trust for Fiji, acting on behalf of the Director of Agriculture. The problems outlined by Dr Ramsay in his last paragraph were all considered and discussed during the negotiations leading up to the signing of this agreement. The number of specimens of any one species that can be taken and the localities at which collections can be made in any one area are very carefully regulated; a number of rare species have been specifically excluded from being "sought and slaughtered in the name of science"

(as Dr Ramsay so charmingly puts it!); a representative of the Trust is to take part in all fieldwork; and, the Trust can stop the collecting of any species in any area at any time, can stop all collecting in an area or add species to the "totally protected" list at any time. No breeding or aviary work is contemplated during this project, but information obtained will obviously be borne in mind as the Trust and the Fijian Government consider adding to their existing reserve system and carry out further measures necessary for the conservation and preservation of birds as well as other animals and plants. Biological collections obtained during this project are to be shared equally between the Fiji Museum and the Dominion Museum.

The first field trip under the agreement has recently been completed. Mr F. C. Kinsky and Mr W. Spiekman of the Dominion Museum accompanied by Mr F. Clunie of the Fiji Museum, representing the National Trust of Fiji, Mr A. Blackburn and Mr L. Henderson of New Zealand spent the period from 20 September to 13 October on Taveuni Island of the Fiji group. Most of the different habitats on the island were investigated up to a height of about 2,500 feet.

R. K. DELL

Director, Dominion Museum

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10 November 1972

The Editor,
Sir,

RECORDINGS OF NEW ZEALAND BIRDS

I enclose a list of bird species that I have recorded or have had recorded on magnetic tape over the last few years. This list is complete and in the order in which the original recordings were made. In some instances more than one recording of a species is available and in every case the time and place are known. As you know, some of these are now available on commercial discs; more will follow.

As I do not have the equipment to analyze the tape recordings made up till now, I have decided to make copies of all my tapes available to any serious student of ornithology currently engaged in research in this field. Those who may be interested can contact me at the address shown below. I should add that this list is being added to as time passes and should reach the 100 mark in a few months time. Any person who would like to contribute recordings to this collection is asked to write to me for further details.

LESLIE B. MCPHERSON

*P.O. Box 21 - 083,
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13 October 1972*