

LETTERS

The Editor,
Sir,

THE FIRST NEW ZEALAND GENTOO: DEATH BY MISADVENTURE ?

It was distressing to read in the report by Darby & Wright (1973: 28) that the first New Zealand Gentoo Penguin recorded "has been retained as a mount by the Otago Museum; catalogue number A72:1, and the carcase preserved in isopropyl alcohol."

To many of your readers a bird is more than a catalogue number or a carcase and it is to be hoped that there were good reasons for destroying this penguin. In view of other statements in the article — "strode up the beach," "this healthy and vigorous immigrant," and "the bird proved to be in excellent condition" — the reader is left to make rather unhappy conclusions as to the reasons for the bird's demise. When comes such another ?

REFERENCE

DARBY, J. T.; WRIGHT, A. W. 1973. First New Zealand record of the Gentoo Penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*). *Notornis* 20 (1): 28-30, 1 fig.

GORDON LEARY

55 Elmslie Road,
Pinehaven,
Upper Hutt,
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The ethics of specimen collecting in the name of science have been argued many times and the Editor is unwilling to throw open the columns of *Notornis* for a prolonged exchange of views on this topic. However, the authors of the article on the Gentoo Penguin have the right of reply, and Mr J. T. Darby comments as follows:

"Every zoologist, particularly a museum zoologist, is faced with this type of situation almost daily. Outwardly it may appear that one's occupation is that of collecting, curating and research; however, all three together do mean education and this is the prime function of museologists. In finally deciding to retain this bird for the museum, there were a number of aspects taken into consideration and fully discussed with other ornithologists: *Firstly*, this bird was a second year bird and therefore it did not have a mate and, as a corollary of this, obviously had not established a territory in any breeding ground; *Secondly*, it did not arrive in New Zealand with a partner and therefore was unlikely to become established as a breeding bird; *Thirdly*, its distance from the closest known breeding colony is considerable and I believe it not unreasonable to imagine that this bird would be unlikely to return from New Zealand to Macquarie Island; *Finally*, although rare to New Zealand, it is a bird that may be counted in millions. Overall, I felt that this specimen could contribute more in education to New Zealanders than either dying in off-shore waters or being savaged on shore by a dog."