

## A FURTHER RECORD OF AMERICAN WHIMBREL

On a routine check of the birds at Mataitai, Clevedon, on 29/9/68, a close party of eight female Bar-tailed Godwits busily feeding, was noted in a wet field just inland from the tidal mudflat. When a four-foot telescope was swung round on its head-high tripod to check them, a feeding Whimbrel (*N. phaeopus*) was found about a chain from the Godwits. At about one hundred and twenty yards the big telescope revealed more detail. The size and uniformly dark brown colour indicated the possibility of its being an American Whimbrel, so the telescope was held on it until a Harrier put the birds up. The Whimbrel flew out on to the mudflat where a team of young birdwatchers was operating. The bird was disturbed and flew several times without going further away. Its back and rump were shown each time, but on three occasions distinctly, and they were as brown as the rest of the upper surface. It has become a habit with the writer to check all Whimbrels seen for the light rump and lower back of *variegatus*, the wholly strong brown of the upper surface of *hudsonicus*, and the cream and light chocolate of the upper tail of *tahitiensis*.

The wariness and restlessness of this bird, which had gone the next day, agreed with my experience with an American Whimbrel at Ohiwa Harbour, Bay of Plenty, in 1949 (Notornis 4, 18-21).

— H. R. McKENZIE

[Most Whimbrels in New Zealand, whether *variegatus* or *hudsonicus*, are flighty and restless. — Ed.]



## LETTER

The Authorship of *cristatus* for the Owllet-Nightjar

Mr. R. J. Scarlet's confusion in the matter of the authorship of *cristatus* for the Owllet-Nightjar is understandable because, as he mentions (Notornis, Vol. 15, 1968, p. 257), some recent authors attribute the name to John White (*Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, 1790) while others give the authority as Shaw (*loc. cit.*). However, as far back as 1834 Swainson (*A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural History*, p. 65) indicated that the names of the birds described in White's *Journal* were given by Shaw, as did Sherborn in 1891 (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. 7), the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1897 (Vol. 51, p. 436) and Waite in 1904 (*Memoirs* (2) N.S.W. Naturalists' Club).

A perusal of the paper in the *Emu* (Vol. 23, 1924, pp. 209-215) dealing with White's *Journal*, and subsequent relevant correspondence (*Emu*, Vol. 24, p. 70, p. 71, p. 147) leaves no doubt at all that Shaw was responsible for the scientific names of both the birds and the fish described in White's *Journal* and that the botanical names and those of the mammals were given by Dr. Smith and John Hunter respectively.

The correct usage of *cristatus* Shaw in its present combination with *Aegotheles* is *cristata*.

The names mentioned above are well known in the realm of the natural sciences. William Swainson (1789-1855) was an outstanding English naturalist and a gifted delineator of natural history objects, being chiefly interested in ornithology, entomology and conchology. Many of his finely-drawn text figures were later used by Alfred Newton in *A Dictionary of Birds* (1893-6). Swainson emigrated to New Zealand, leaving London in 1840. He is not to be confused with his namesake, William Swainson, who seems to have reached New Zealand from England, by way of Tasmania, about the same time and who later became Attorney-General in New Zealand. William Swainson, the naturalist-author-artist, is buried in the cemetery at Lower Hutt, near Wellington.

Dr. Charles Davies Sherborn (1861-1942) was the great bibliographer and compiler of the *Index Animalium* (1890-1933). Smith was Dr. (later Sir) James Edward Smith (1759-1828), an eminent botanist, a close friend of Sir Joseph Banks, and one of the founders of the Linnaean Society of London of which institution he was President for forty years. In 1784 he purchased Linnaeus' famous collection. Dr. George Shaw (1751-1813) was also one of the founders of the Linnaean Society. He was Keeper of the British Museum and author of a number of books on natural history. John Hunter (1728-1793) was the famous surgeon and anatomist. Waite was Edgar Ravenswood Waite (1866-1928), an Englishman from Leeds who became Curator of the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1906 and, later, Director of the South Australian Museum.

John White (1756?-1832), in whose *Voyage* the name *cristatus* appears, was Surgeon-General of the colony founded at Sydney in 1788. He was an enthusiastic amateur naturalist and sent many specimens and drawings of plants and animals to scientific friends in England.

Sydney, Australia.

— K. A. HINDWOOD



## REVIEWS

*Field Guide to the Alpine Plants of New Zealand*, by Professor J. T. Salmon; A. H. & A. W. Reed, \$5.60.

If you spend most of your days, as most of us do, in the lowlands but are able once in a while to make an excursion into the mountains, this is one of the books you must have in your car pocket or knapsack. We are assuming, of course, that you are an intelligent lover of the New Zealand scene with a discerning eye for its bewildering array of choice alpine plants and the curiosity to want to know what they are. For the naturalist there is a new world in the high country. It may have some sharp surprises for the uninitiated. If you have experienced the agony of sitting unexpectedly on one of the less tractable species of speargrass — incidentally, is it good for international relations to call them Wild Spaniards? — it may be some balm to your soul, if not to your seat, to be able to identify the spiny offender on the spot. Dr. Salmon's strongly bound field guide with its hundreds of admirable photographs is the magic key.

One word of warning to the birdwatcher. With this new botanical field guide to hand, he may easily be side-tracked; for above the bushline, while the ornithologist has only a bare handful of species