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SHORT NOTE

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus* at Muriwai Beach

On 16 June 1992, JD found the corpse of a beach-wrecked dark-coloured tern at the south end of Muriwai Beach, north-west of Auckland. The specimen was putrid and the body cavity was empty, but most feathers were still adhering. To stabilise the specimen, BJG washed it in detergent, soaked it in 5% formalin for a week and air-dried it. It is now in the collection at Auckland Museum, registered B3654.

The specimen has a stout black bill with a prominent gonys on the lower mandible. The small legs and feet are black. On drying it became clear that the primaries and tail are black while the body feathers are dark brown. The head is dark brown but there are traces of white around the eye and between the eye and the frontal area.

Measurements of the wet specimen were: left wing 265 mm, exposed culmen 36 mm, right tarsometatarsus 25 mm. These measurements agree with those given for Common Noddy by Serventy *et al.* (1971). In overall size and shape the specimen agrees closely with two skins of *Anous stolidus* from the Pacific held at Auckland Museum. We consider it to be an immature bird as these often lack the white cap (Serventy *et al.* 1971).

Discussion

Common Noddies are pantropical (Harrison 1983). In the New Zealand area they breed on Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands (Condon 1975). Cheeseman

(1891) stated that the Common Noddy "probably breeds" on the Kermadec Islands, but this was discounted (e.g. Mathews & Iredale 1913). However, they were recently discovered breeding on Curtis Island in the Kermadec group (Turbott 1990). Other than this there are two records of specimens from New Zealand, both from last century and regarded as somewhat doubtful.

Oliver (1930) stated that "there is a specimen in the Reischek collection in Vienna [i.e. the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria] labelled as coming from the east coast of the North Island and dated 1885. . . . Reischek's specimen is a young bird and the subspecies to which it belongs is indeterminable". Dr K.E. Westerskov, who has made a special study of Andreas Reischek's large collection at the Vienna Natural History Museum (Westerskov 1990) and at the museum in Linz (where Reischek was curator), found no specimens of Common Noddy among the hundreds of specimens he examined (pers. comm.). The source of Oliver's record thus remains a mystery.

Buller (1905: 162) noted a specimen at Canterbury Museum "which was taken on the high seas, not very far from our coasts". This specimen cannot now be located at the museum (G.A. Tunncliffe, pers. comm.), so again the record cannot be verified.

The present specimen from Muriwai is nominally the third record of the Common Noddy in New Zealand other than at the Kermadecs. It is the first this century and seems to be the only record that can be verified.

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