

*Eudiptula undina.*

In further illustration of my view that this bird is specifically distinct from *Eudiptula minor*, I beg to submit sketches of the bill (Figs. 3 and 4, Plate) shewing the relative size. These sketches are from specimens in the Colonial Museum.

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ART. XXXIII.—*On the Occurrence of the Royal Spoonbill (Platalea regia) in New Zealand.* By WALTER L. BULLER, C.M.G., Sc.D., President.

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, July 29th, 1876.]

I HAVE much pleasure in laying before the Society a fine specimen of the Australian Spoonbill, recently obtained at Manawatu, and kindly forwarded to me by Mr. Charles Hulke, of Foxton, to whom I am further indebted for the following notes:—"This Spoonbill was shot in April last, near the mouth of the Manawatu River, by Mr. Blake, who, from having served under Messrs. Speke and Grant in Africa, never loses sight of any curiosity if possible. It was sitting on the sand in company with three Paradise Ducks (*Casarca variegata*). Mr. Blake saw that the bird was a stranger, and he was attempting to get the four birds in line, when his dog startled them, and up they flew. Sacrificing the ducks for the sake of getting the stranger, he fired and the bird fell upon the sand with a heavy thud. It measured 4 feet 2½ inches from tip to tip of wings, and when laid on the table preparatory for skinning, it measured from the tip of the bill to the end of the tarsi 3 feet 9 inches. The body was about the size of a small goose; legs, bill, and skin of throat jet black, marked with orange round the eyes, assuming the form of a narrow streak below, and a crescent mark above. I observed that the tongue was very short, and that the passage to the gullet was furnished with small fringed flaps, or valvular appendages, somewhat similar to those at the base of the tongue, but much deeper. Having very little time at my disposal, I was unable to make a very minute examination of the specimen. It struck me, however, that the wing-shoulders were placed well back, indicating great power of flight. From the small size of the occipital crest, I judged that the specimen was a female. It was evident, also, that it had almost finished moulting.

"This bird has been seen for some five or six months about the lagoons in the vicinity of Mr. Robinson's homestead. By his sons it had been taken for a White Shag. Only one had been seen by them, but I have been informed by a person who is in the habit of crossing the country between Foxton and Rangitikei, that he is confident he has seen another specimen near the Rangitikei River. No other specimen has, however, been seen in company with the one sent herewith."

Mr. Ellman, in his paper on the "Birds of New Zealand,"\* states that a Spoonbill was known to the Natives residing at Castle Point, on the east coast of Wellington, who called it a "*Kotuku-ngutu-papa*." Mr. Ellman proposed for it the name of *Ardea latirostrum*.†

The specimen now exhibited is undoubtedly referable to the species first described by Mr. Gould in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society" as the Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*), and this may be regarded as the first authentic record of its occurrence in New Zealand. It is tolerably common on the eastern and northern coast of Australia, and (according to Gould) although a rare visitant there, it has been killed within the colony of New South Wales.

As Mr. Gould has pointed out in his "Birds of Australia," this fine species may be readily distinguished from the *Platalea leucorodia* of Europe by the nudity of its face, which, even considerably beyond the eyes, is entirely destitute of feathers, and is of the same black colour as the bill. In other respects, both as to size and plumage, little difference exists between the two species. As with the European Spoonbill also, the fine crest which adorns the head of birds in full feather is assumed only in the pairing and breeding season. "In its habits and disposition it as closely assimilates to its European prototype as it does in general appearance, for like that bird it takes up its abode on the margin of those marshy inlets of the sea that run for a considerable distance into the interior, and on the banks of rivers and lakes, and feeds upon small-shelled molluscs, frogs, insects, and the fry of fish, which are readily taken by its beautifully organized bill."—(Gould)

The example before us is of course an accidental straggler to our shores from the Australian Continent, but it is none the less interesting as a conspicuous addition to the recognised Avifauna of New Zealand.

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ART. XXXIV.—*Observations on a species of Shag inhabiting Queen Charlotte Sound.* By WALTER L. BULLER, C.M.G., Sc.D., President.

Plate.

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, November 25th, 1876]

At a meeting of this Society, held last year, I exhibited three specimens (male, female, and young) of a species of Shag from Queen Charlotte Sound, which appeared to differ in some of its characters from *Phalacrocorax car-*

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\* Published in the "Zoologist" of 1861; see Buller, "Trans. N.Z. Institute," Essay on Ornithology, Vol. I., p. 16. *n.e.*, I., p. 228.

† "Zoologist," 1861, p. 7469.