

ART. XXIV.—*Described Species of New Zealand Aranear omitted from the Catalogue of 1891, "Transactions of the New Zealand Institute."*

By A. T. URQUHART.

[Read before the Auckland Institute, 5th October, 1896.]

I AM indebted to Captain F. W. Hutton for the subjoined list of species described by Adam White in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society," London, 1849, p. 3:—

*Mygale (Cteniza) antipodum.*

*Mygale (Cteniza) zenops.*

*Dolomides sagittiger.*

*Dolomides lateralis.*

*Attus darwinii.*

[*Attus abbreviatus*, Walck., and *A. cookii*, Walck., are also mentioned from New Zealand, and probably *Attus phrinoides*, Walck.]

*Spharus gracilipes.*

*Tegenaria antipodiana.*

*Dendridgia dysderoides.*

ART. XXV.—*Natural History Notes.*

By S. H. DREW, Curator of the Public Museum, Wanganui.

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, 22nd July, 1896.]

**Wood-pigeon (*Carpophaga novæ-zealandiæ*).**

A beautiful male specimen of our wood-pigeon (*C. novæ-zealandiæ*), with abnormal plumage, has been presented to the Wanganui Museum by Mr. T. Harper, of Mangamahu. Head, neck, breast, belly, and tarsi are quite of normal colour, but the mantle, wings, scapulars, back, and tail are white, shaded at tips of feathers to darkish-grey; ends of primaries and tail darker grey; a few darker feathers here and there on the back and secondaries and wing-coverts add to the beauty of this handsome bird.

**Cnemidornis.**

A box of moa-bones taken from one of the cuttings on the main trunk line near Hunterville, North Island, has been sent to our Museum by Mr. John S. Stewart. Amongst the many moa-bones I was pleased to notice the femur, tibia, and tarso-

metatarsal bones of the extinct goose, *Cnemiornis*. I do not know at what depth the bones were found, but the holes and grooves in all were filled with Tertiary marine shells and sand. It may also be interesting to say that in 1894 the Rev. A. O. Williams procured for us from Te Aute Swamp, Hawke's Bay, a quantity of moa-bones, amongst which I obtained a number of bones of *Cnemiornis* and also of *Cygnus sumnerensis*.

#### **Moa remains.**

The remains of a large moa have been brought to light from the old estuary gravel-pits of St. John's Hill, on the town side of the Wanganui River, and directly opposite the blue-clay bluff called Shakspeare Cliff. In May last the borough workmen reached a depth of 65ft. from the surface, finding the bones, which consist of a tibia, femur, and several of the vertebræ. They were very soft and brittle, and consequently much broken in the digging-out. The workmen state that there were a number of other bones, but far too soft to do anything with. It is interesting to note the occurrence of moa-bones in this district at this great depth, as hitherto such finds here have only been in the lighter surface-deposits.

#### **Botaurus pœciloptilus.**

To-day my son was dissecting a common bittern (*Botaurus pœciloptilus*) and called my attention to the undigested food it had eaten. We found the "bill of fare" for that day to have been a silver-eye (*Zosterops cærulescens*), frog (acclimatised from Australia), five locusts, a large spider, two common sand-liguras, remains of a small fish, &c. My experience of the bittern is that it will only feed on living animals, not eating anything dead. If so, it must have caught the silver-eye alive. No doubt the busy little silver-eye, intent upon its hunting, would gradually approach the motionless bittern, and thus fall an easy prey. It is well known that the bittern varies its feeding, but this is the first instance in my knowledge of a bird being found in its stomach, adding still another enemy to our useful little migrant blight-bird. From a bittern last summer we extracted seven mice, and from another a half-grown rat, besides other delicacies. In spite of this bird being so useful to the farmer it is ruthlessly shot, and, like the rest, will soon be a bird of the past. Twenty years ago it was very common in the swampy ground of this coast, but its slow, easy flight makes it a capital target for the cockney sportsman, who could not hit anything that rose faster. There are so many so-called sportsmen who will shoot at anything that flies that it is a question whether the introduction of foreign game has not had something to do with the extinction of some of our native birds.

***Orthogoriscus mola*.**

In May last the Wanganui Museum was fortunate to secure an unusually large specimen of the sun-fish (*Orthogoriscus mola*). I received a telegram from Mr. Wilson Craig, of Napier, kindly telling me that a sun-fish had been captured in their inner harbour, and that he had purchased it for us. Mr. Charles Smith (who is one of the earliest members of this learned Society, and an indefatigable worker in the interests of our Museum) at once joined me and we started for our prize. We reached the Western Spit, Napier, early on Tuesday, the 5th of May, and found that the fish had been dead a week. The captors informed us the monster was seen to enter the inner harbour on the flood-tide near high-water. While it was in the deeper parts of the harbour little else was seen than the top of the upper fin, causing many to imagine it was either a very large shark or a small whale. Nearing Petane Bridge its progress was stopped, the lower fin touching ground in the more shallow water, causing the fish to lose its upright position; but, after much flapping of the huge upper fin, the strong tide forced the creature between the piles of the bridge, eventually stranding it about a mile further on. The spectators watched with great interest, and many were the opinions as to what the animal really was. A crew of Maoris were the first to attempt capture, but on near approach the wild movements of the upper fin caused so much fear that they beat a retreat. Two fishermen of the name of Boyd were the next to attack, and they killed the fish after much stabbing with manuka poles. I do not think I ever saw a specimen so mutilated. Every one with a pocket-knife seems to have hacked at it, and one piece of the side, weighing about 2cwt., was found fully a quarter of a mile up the beach. Even mementoes of the monster were taken, one woman getting a pectoral fin to dry for a fire-screen; and square pieces were cut out of the skin, in the same way as one sees a grocer cut a cheese for tasting. After the viscera were removed, and the 2cwt. piece mentioned above, the fish was taken to the weighbridge, and scaled 37cwt.; so that, had it been weighed when perfect, there is little doubt that it would have exceeded 2 tons. Its measurements as it lay on the beach were—Depth from tip to tip of fins, 12ft. 7in.; greatest length, 9ft. 8in.; greatest thickness, as near as I could tell, 1ft. 6in. The eyeball was 4½in. in diameter, the iris being silvery blue, with darker blue and black markings. The colour of the skin when we saw it was grey, the fins being almost black; belly lighter grey. The fishermen said that the colour had not altered much, for when caught “it was a sort of dirty blacklead colour all over.” There certainly were none of the reds mentioned by Couch;—possibly with age the red colour is lost. The men told us of the vast quantities of internal

parasites that infested this fish. They spoke of huge knots of tape-like worms as "big as two fists," masses matted together of round smooth worms of several kinds; and in the gills, mouth, or anywhere they could fasten were parasitical crustaceans, "flat, crab-like fellows with long tails." Unfortunately, these "beastly things" were carefully collected and thrown into the sea before we arrived, nor could they understand that we should wish to save such things. After gaining this small amount of information, we engaged three men, who with ourselves made a start to remove the skin. This occupied three days, working all the hours of daylight. On Friday the work was sufficiently far advanced to get the skin into a cask, so that we could bring it and the skeleton home for further treatment. It was a most unpleasant task to all. It was not skinning as one would skin any other fish, mammal, or bird, but we found it was all the time cutting a hard gristly substance that very quickly turned the edges of the sharpest knives, blistering our hands that had already been made sore by the cutting roughness of the skin.

There being so many cuts as well as pieces missing, I found I could only mount it as a half-fish, so I patched up the one side with pieces from the other.

This fish seems to be one of the largest caught so far. Most of the books I have on this subject mention the British Museum specimen as of greatest size, but this only measures 8ft. 6in. from tip to tip of fins. Mr. Etheridge, the curator of the Australian Museum, Sydney, writes, "It may perhaps interest you to know that our largest specimen, stranded at Manly, Port Jackson, is 8ft. 3in. long by 11ft. deep—i.e., from tip to tip of fins."

Mr. Hamilton, in "Transactions of the New Zealand Institute," vol. xviii., page 136, gives the measurement of one stranded near Napier as 8ft. 1½in. in length.

Archdeacon Williams mentions a sun-fish in the "Transactions of the New Zealand Institute," vol. xxv., page 110, the total length of which was 9ft. 8in., and depth from tip to tip of fins 11ft. 6½in. The weight of this fish was guessed at 3½ tons, but I think this must be an error in judgment, as our larger fish weighed but little more than half.

The latest capture is the one in the Dunedin Museum. Mr. Hamilton has kindly sent me photographs, but not the measurements. I trust it will be noted in the Transactions.

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