

LETTER

The Editor,
Sir,

In "A second Magellanic Penguin in New Zealand" (*Notornis* 38: 36), J. T. Darby stated that, "As with the earlier find of a Magellanic Penguin, this bird obviously had been held as a pet." Based on the bird taking food from the hand and greeting its handler with a variety of calls in the early morning, the bird is termed a *pet*.

Although the bird may have been domesticated and so have been a pet, it is more likely to have had a trip across the Pacific, intended for the lucrative Far Eastern market. A better term might be a *tame bird*. I have looked after various birds that have shown similar behaviour after being fed once or twice, for example, a giant petrel that, after only one feed, would greet me and pull at my shorts. The Magellanic Penguins I have seen near Punta Arenas (Chile) seemed very tame, standing in front of their burrows and allowing close approach without much alarm.

Tameness is a fascinating subject, often recorded in literature.

HENK F. HEINEKAMP, *Box 2128, Stoke*

Tame birds and pet birds are two quite different things. My use of "pet" was deliberate, for I have yet to see a "tame" wild penguin eat food from a plate on the ground with such practised confidence as this bird did. Likewise the term "tame" should be used with caution. That a bird allows one to approach its nest without apparent alarm does not make it "tame"; in fact, many birds lack flight response, but to a student of animal behaviour most of these so called "tame" birds exhibit considerable signs of alarm and stress behaviour. In short I do not accept that an entity such as a "tame" bird exists in the wild. Easily approached, apparently unperturbed, relative docile, but "tame", never! Incidentally, Dr Dee Boersma, an eminent authority on the *Spheniscus* group, has since visited the smallest colony of Magellanics in the world on Otago Peninsula. She has determined that Albert is not an Albert but a Bertha. We now understand better why she flirts with male yellow-eyeds and sends the rest on their way.

J. T. DARBY, *Otago Museum*

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