

Bartle (1968) said that the burrows of Buller's Shearwater on Aorangi Island had increased from almost nil in 1925, when wild pigs were present, to about 100 000 in 1964, 28 years after the pigs had been exterminated. This trend has continued and Bartle (pers. comm.) has suggested that the burrows on Aorangi doubled between 1964 and 1980. This increase is reflected in the larger numbers seen in the Tasman Sea (Fig. 1-9) than the mere 20 birds seen over a long period of Tasman crossings before 1974 (Jenkins 1974).

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SHORT NOTE

The Hakawai

Colin Miskelly's paper on "The identity of the Hakawai" (*Notornis* 34(2): 95-116) makes most a convincing case for the Stewart Island Snipe. It is particularly satisfying to be able to rescue from mythology all those traditional stories of a fabulous bird that cries in the night but is never seen.

There must be many references to Hakawai or Hokioi in old writings, but one I came across may be of interest. The diary of Frederick Tuckett, surveyor for the New Zealand Company (published in T. M. Hocken's *Contribution to the Early History of New Zealand*, 1898), described his

explorations in Southland in 1844. He made the following comment as an aside to his entry for Friday 24 May:

All the people frequenting this coast [of Foveaux Strait] believe in the existence of an extraordinary bird, or phantom, which they can never see, but only hear rushing past them with the rapidity of a falling rocket, and making a terrible rushing sound. The Maories declare that it is a bird possessing many joints in its wings. The whalers call them *break-sea-devils*, after the name of an island where this phenomenon is of most frequent occurrence.

It is not clear which is the island referred to, for there are at least three named Breaksea. That in the mouth of Breaksea Sound, Fiordland, is perhaps least likely, but either the group off Shelter Point to the east of Stewart Island, or the small islet south of Green Island, off Ruapuke Island, could have held Hakawai, Break-sea Devils – or Stewart Island Snipe. But clearly the sound of the mysterious bird was well known in the Foveaux Strait region in 1844.

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The extract from Frederick Tuckett's diary was also sent to me by Dr Atholl Anderson (Anthology Department, University of Otago). Jenkin (1970) discussed the "mysterious *hakuwai* bird", and wrote (p. 157) that "a similar strange bird, called by the whalers the Breaksea Devil, was said to be heard on Breaksea Island". I considered the record too vague for inclusion in my hakawai paper but now that the source and context of the information are known, Breaksea Island can be added to the list of island where snipe/hakawai occurred. Tuckett was probably referring to Rukawahakura and/or Wharepuiataha Islands (47°07' S, 168° 13' E), south of Port Adventure, where muttonbirds (*Puffinus griseus*) are still harvested annually. The other "Breaksea Islands" in the Foveaux Strait region (46° 48' S, 168° 34' E) are unlikely to have had a snipe population as they are tiny, although less than 2 km from Green I., which did have snipe.

Rukawahakura and Wharepuiataha Is have had ship rat (*Rattus rattus*) for many years and have a depauperate bird fauna (Beattie 1954: 38). It is interesting that Tuckett's mention of "break-sea-deveils" was made towards the end of the muttonbird season (24 May) – it is possible that the sound was heard on "Breaksea Island" in April or May 1844.

I am interested to hear of any other reports of hakawai or related phenomena found by readers.

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