

Natural dens for possums are plentiful, especially in the red tussock (*Chionochloa rubra*) and flax (*Phormium tenax*) in the pasture area where this burrow was located.

My thanks to Tim & Ngaire Te Aika for their help and showing me the burrow and checking it after I left.

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A Tahiti Petrel (*Pseudobulweria rostrata*) from Gau Island, Fiji

The bird fauna of Gau Island, which is roughly at the centre of the Fiji archipelago at 18° 00' S, 179° 16' E, is reasonably well known (Watling 1985). It includes two species of petrel, the Collared Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera brevipes*, which breeds, in large numbers, and the Fiji Petrel *Pseudobulweria macgillivrayi*, which is apparently endemic to Gau and has recently been rediscovered, having been presumed "lost" since 1855 (Watling & Lewanavanua 1985). We now report the presence of a third species, the Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata* on the island.

On 29 September 1987 we found the cat-killed remains of an adult *P. rostrata* at 620 m a.s.l. on a track following the steep-sided NW ridge of Qilai (a subsidiary peak of the island's main summit, Delaco; see Watling (1985) for a general description of the island's topography). The remains were estimated to be 2-3 weeks old and hard to measure, being in an advanced state of decomposition. The following measurements were noted, however: culmen 32 mm, tarsus 45.5 mm, mid-toe and claw 55.4 mm, wing 285 mm. These measurements are in reasonable agreement with the measurements quoted by Murphy & Pennoyer (1952). The blunt ends to the latericorn plates of the bill, which usefully distinguish *Pseudobulweria* from *Pterodroma* (Imber 1985), were distinctly obvious.

Previously the only record of *P. rostrata* on land in the Fiji group is of an immature female which flew into a light on Taveuni island on 9 October 1972 and considered by Bourne (1981) to have been reared locally. Jenkins (1986) has reviewed records of *P. rostrata* in Fijian waters, to which we can add the following:

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| 10 May 1986 | 1 bird 2 miles S of Rewa delta, Viti Levu. |
| Aug 1986 | I. Watkins found a bird dying in Suva harbour, Viti Levu. The bird is preserved as a formalin-mummified specimen in the Fiji Museum, Suva. |
| 21 Nov 1986 | 4 birds 5 miles E of Taveuni. |
| 10 Sep 1987 | 1 bird, probably this sp., S of Fiji at 21° S, 177° E. |
| 9 Oct 1987 | 1 bird, probably this sp., 10 miles W of Gau. |

All Fijian records have been between April and November, and it now seems possible that *P. rostrata* is a winter breeder on Gau, Taveuni and perhaps other islands of the group. We made an intensive search of the area where remains were found but found no evidence of breeding. We also spent a total of 114 hours between 15 September and 9 October 1987 operating floodlights and spotlights at night from several sites on the island, including the NW ridge of Qilai, but saw no Tahiti Petrels. In 1984 and 1985, spotlighting during February, April, May and July was equally unproductive (Watling & Lewanavanua 1985, Imber 1986). If *P. rostrata* does indeed breed on Gau it probably does so in low numbers, although large areas have still to be explored for breeding petrels.

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