

M. halli, which is sympatric with *M. giganteus* on Macquarie Island. Therefore, they can now be identified only as giant petrels *Macronectes* sp.

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REVIEWS

Children of Tane (VP 429); *Friends of Maui* (VP 444); *Birds of New Zealand* (VP 445). Also as cassettes.

The first of these three discs was released to coincide with Conservation Week 1979. It consists of 19 bird species heard on Radio New Zealand's early call programme with Robert Taylor, and songs in Maori by Sydney Melbourne about each species. For me, it's too much music and not enough bird song, and I don't like the blending of music into bird song. The birds take a definite third place to the music and to Robert Taylor's instructive comments. The second disc, released for Conservation Week 1980, has 19 seabird species and the Long-tailed Cuckoo, included because of its place in Maori mythology. It has 3 species not previously available on disc; the first one has 4 such species. The field recordings are by John Kendrick of Wildlife Service and are of high standard.

The third disc, released in August 1980, has all the birds of the other discs plus Taylor's comments. The playing time for each bird is greatly expanded, and so this is the choice for the ornithologist, unless you like Maori music and mythology for preference. All three make a great souvenir for tourists in New Zealand.

— LES McPHERSON

NEW RATITE FROM NEW CALEDONIA

Sylviornis neocaledoniae n.g., n.sp. (Aves, *Ratite eteint de la Nouvelle-Caledonie*, by Poplin, Francois 1980. *C.R.Acad. Sc. Paris* Vol. 290, Serie D, pp. 691-694.

A medium-sized lightly built ratite, like *Rhea*, *Casuarius* and *Dromaius* (the emu) but most like the last two, is described from a first phalange, the body of a left femur, two tibiotarsi and a tarsometatarsus. They represent a bird resembling an emu, cassowary or rhea in general profile, of the size of a small emu (such as Black Emu).

Sylviornis confirms that the Rhatites are distributed on fragments of Gondwanaland, supporting the view of their common origin on that continent and dispersal without flying.

The bones come from Quaternary (probably Recent) brecciated coral reef and are older than the phase of brecciation which they themselves have suffered. The locality is an elevated barrier reef on the south of the Ile de Pins, Bay of Kanumera, a spot called Ure. The spongy ends of the bones have been lost and the diaphyses broken and dislocated. Geologists may be curious, as I was, about the cause of the brecciation.

The bones give substance to the local legend of the "Du," described as having on its head an ornament like a cassowary's. Archaeology in these regions has already shown that the oral tradition could apply to events several centuries ago. *Sylviornis* was able to persist into our own millennium, especially on the main island, more favourable for its survival. Undoubtedly, the author believes, it was exterminated by human beings who had been on New Caledonia for several millennia.

— C. A. FLEMING

Fossil Counterparts of Giant Penguins from the North Pacific, by Storrs L. Olson & Yoshikazu Hasegawa. 1979. *Science* 206, 9 November.

The extinct family Plotopteridae (Pelecaniformes) includes at least three genera of flightless penguin-like birds known as Oligocene and early Miocene fossils from Japan and Washington State. They most resemble Anhingidae in hindlimb and pelvic morphology but have paddle-like wings, convergent with those of penguins and flightless auks. The largest Japanese species probably exceeded 2 metres in length and may have been larger than the largest fossil penguin. Giant penguins and Plotopterids may have gone under to competition from seals and porpoises when they diversified to occupy similar pelagic niches, as first suggested by G. G. Simpson for the former.

— C. A. FLEMING