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AN ANALYSIS OF NANKEEN KESTREL PELLETS

Two years ago, I wrote some short notes (*Notornis* 22: 341-342, 1975) concerning my observations of a Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) at a limestone quarry near Paki Paki. This bird was roosting on the quarry face and was still doing so when I left to go overseas on July 19 1975. When I returned nearly four months later, it had gone and I have not seen it since. However, I was fortunate in finding at the bottom of the face, several pellets in good condition. Having seen kestrel pellets whilst in England, I am quite certain the pellets I collected were ejected by the roosting Nankeen Kestrel.

Pellet

Prey Identification

- No. 1 Bird, either Yellow Hammer or Greenfinch, distal part of tarsus; grass seed.
 No. 2 Mouse, upper left molars 1, 2 & 3, lower right incisor and molar 1; bird, feather fragments, species?; grass seed.
 No. 3 Mouse, 1 upper left molar 1, 1 lower left incisor and molar 1, 1 lower right incisor; bird, feather and bone fragment, probably Yellow Hammer, proximal end of humerus, and Redpoll, distal part of tarsus.
 No. 4 Mouse, 1 lower right incisor, 1 lower left incisor; bird, Redpoll; grass seed.

- No. 5 Mouse, 1 lower left incisor, 1 lower right incisor and molar 1; bird, unidentified feather and bone fragments; grass seed.
- No. 6 Mouse, 1 lower right incisor; bird, unidentified feathers and bone fragments and gizzard with grass seed and insect fragments; grass seed.
- No. 7 Mouse, upper left 1 incisor, molar 1, 1 upper right incisor, 1 lower left incisor, 2 lower right incisors, 1 molar 1 & 2, 1 humerus; bird, unidentified feathers and bone; grass seed.
- No. 8 Mouse fat; bird, unidentified feather and bone fragments; grass seed.

Pellet Fragment: Mouse, 5 upper left and 4 upper right incisors, 2 upper right molar 1, 6 lower left and 5 lower right incisors, 1 lower left molar 1 & 2, 2 lower right molar 1, 1 humerus and bone fragments, fur; bird, Yellow Hammer? (proximal femur) or bird of that size, bone fragment and feathers.

The contents of these pellets shows that Nankeen Kestrels in New Zealand prey on a range of species similar to those found in Australia. Yellow Hammers and Redpolls are not found in Australia, but are prey of the European Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*).

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BANDED DOTTERELS ON THE VILLAGE GREEN

On the evening of 11 January 1961 when I was staying in Hokitika, I found at least 25 Banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) feeding over The Square, a sort of village green and sports ground with a concrete wicket near the middle. The dotterels flew in over the houses from the direction of the riverbed and some were running actually over the surrounding footpaths and roads.

Nine years later, on 4 January 1970, I was again in Hokitika and towards dusk made my way to The Square. This time I counted 29 Banded Dotterels, sharing the short turf of The Square with c. 100 Black-billed Gulls (*Larus bulleri*), two dogs and some children. Again some of the dotterels appeared to be finding something to eat on the tar-seal. This confident acceptance of a man-made facility is most encouraging. Perhaps evening strollers who watch birds in Hokitika will be able to confirm whether this acquired habit persists.