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## SHORT NOTE

### Incubation length in Chatham Island snipe (*Coenocorypha pusilla*)

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Few incubation lengths have been obtained for snipe of the genus *Coenocorypha*. All 5 extant taxa plus the recently extinct South Island snipe (*C. iredalei*) typically lay (or laid) clutches of 2 eggs, meaning that there is only a short time period

during which to locate a nest with an incomplete clutch (Miskelly 1990, 1999; Miskelly & de Lange 2006; Miskelly *et al.* 2006). The only species that has been well studied at the start of incubation is the Snares Island snipe (*C. huegeli*), where the mean egg interval for 5 nests was 3 days (range 68 h to 76 h), and the mean incubation length for 3 nests (clutch completion to hatch) was 22 days

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**Table 1.** Mean female body mass and mean fresh egg mass (g) for 6 taxa of *Coenocorypha* snipe (data from Miskelly & de Lange 2006, and Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Species		Mean female mass (g)	Mean egg mass (g)
Chatham Island snipe	<i>Coenocorypha pusilla</i>	80.3	16.1
South Island snipe	<i>C. iredalei</i>	95 (estimated)	19.1
Snares Island snipe	<i>C. huegeli</i>	115.5	23.7
Auckland Island snipe	<i>C. aucklandica aucklandica</i>	116.1	22.4
Antipodes Island snipe	<i>C. a. meinertzhagenae</i>	117.3	22.9
Campbell Island snipe	<i>C. a. perseverance</i>	102.3	22.1

(range 21 days 11 h  $\pm$  8 h to 22 days 13 h  $\pm$  6 h; Miskelly 1990).

Chatham Island snipe (*C. pusilla*) have been recorded laying from late Jul to early Apr (Miskelly 1990, 1999; Miskelly *et al.* 2006). We observed them during parts of the 1981/82 & 1982/83 breeding seasons (AM, mainly on Mangere I) and the 1983/84 breeding season (CM & AM, on Rangatira I). Thirty-one nests were found, all with 2 eggs (15 on Mangere I, 16 on Rangatira I); 14 of the latter were included in analyses by Miskelly (1990, 1999). Incubation period was defined as the period between the day the last egg was laid and the day the last-laid egg hatched.

Only 1 nest (on Mangere I) was followed from having a single egg through to successful hatching. The nest contained 1 egg on 11 Oct 1981 and 2 eggs on 12 Oct; both eggs hatched on 30 Oct. This gives an incubation period of 18 days for the 2<sup>nd</sup> egg after clutch completion.

Three other nests found with complete clutches had longer incubation periods than the above nest: 1 egg hatched on Mangere I on c.3 Nov 1981, 19 days after the nest was found on 15 Oct (the 2nd egg failed to hatch); 2 eggs hatched on Rangatira I on 24 Nov 1982, 20 days after they were found on 4 Nov; and 2 eggs hatched on 15 & 16 Jan 1984, 19-20 days after they were found on 27 Dec 1983.

At least 1 of the 4 incubation lengths of 18 to 20+ days observed for *C. pusilla* was substantially

shorter than the 22 days observed for *C. huegeli*. *C. pusilla* is considerably smaller than other members of the genus, and lays eggs that are 16 to 32% smaller (Table 1). It is likely that the 3 subspecies of subantarctic snipe *C. aucklandica* all have incubation lengths approaching those of *C. huegeli*.

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