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Confirmation of a nocturnal aerial display by Auckland Island Snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica aucklandica*)

Miskelly (1987) documented the evidence for nocturnal aerial displays for most forms of *Coenocorypha* snipe, but the only evidence for such behaviour in the Auckland Island Snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica aucklandica*) was tail feather wear in four or five museum specimens. The aerial display of *Coenocorypha* snipe consists of a short series of disyllabic whistles, followed by a loud non-vocal roar, thought to be produced by vibrating tail rectrices as the birds dive at speed. Unusual tail feather wear in *Coenocorypha* snipe, including in the Auckland Island form, was attributed to stress on the rectrices during display flights.

In June 1998, I heard Auckland Island Snipe giving nocturnal aerial calls on three occasions. Between 0015 and 0115 hrs on 23 June above the western end of

Sandy Bay, Enderby Island, I heard a snipe giving aerial displays about every two minutes. The disyllabic vocal component of the call was repeated two to five times before the non-vocal roar, similar to a jet passing, was given. A bird on the ground often responded by calling. These birds were still calling when I went to sleep at 0115 hrs. On 24 June at c. 1900 hrs near the eastern bay on Ewing Island, I heard one snipe briefly displaying in flight, giving three disyllabic vocal calls followed by the non-vocal roar. Another snipe was similarly displaying, briefly at c. 1915 hrs, in a different location to the last, but also near the eastern bay. Later that night, a snipe was heard calling on the ground in the central forest of Ewing Island. The conditions were still, cloudless and moonless when all these displays were given. The displays sounded similar to those that I have heard given by the Chatham Island Snipe (*Coenocorypha pusilla*).

It is surprising that previous observers have not reported aerial displaying by Auckland Island Snipe, given the frequency with which I observed these displays. During three days ashore at the Auckland Islands (including single nights on Enderby, Ewing and Ocean Islands), I saw only two snipe, both at the eastern end of Sandy Bay at night. Of the five snipe that I heard calling, three were giving aerial displays. No snipe were detected on Ocean Island.

These observations confirm Miskelly's (1987) suggestion that the Auckland Island Snipe has an aerial display.

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