

SHORT NOTE

Attempted colonisation of Antipodes Island by goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*)

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Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) are not established at the Antipodes Island group, 49°42'S, 178°47'E (Warham & Bell 1979; Tennyson *et al.* 2002), and have been recorded there previously only once. In January 1901, "The Goldfinch was seen — on Bollons Island, Antipodes; —" according to F.W. Hutton (Ogilvie-Grant 1905). Bollons is the second largest island in the group. None was seen on Antipodes Island through February 2001 (K. Walker pers. comm.).

On passage from Akaroa Harbour, South Island, New Zealand to Antipodes Island on 20 April 2001, a juvenile goldfinch was seen at 46°31'S, 174°58'E, a position that is 340 km from Akaroa Harbour and 450 km from Antipodes Island. It flew towards our ship as if to perch but then flew off south-eastwards, the direction in which we were sailing. At about the same time (mid-April), 12 goldfinches were seen from a fishing vessel at 48°S, 179°E (M. Bell pers. comm.), approximately 140 km east of our course and between Bounty and Antipodes Islands.

On Antipodes Island, a flock of 20-25 goldfinches was seen near the island's hut at Anchorage Bay on 25 April 2001 (B. Bell pers. comm.). During the subsequent six weeks, goldfinches were seen or heard on seven occasions near the hut, once on North Plains and twice in Ringdove valley. In addition, four were found dead — three adults near the hut and a juvenile above Stella Bay. Two of these were deposited later at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (reg. nos MNZ 27011 and MNZ 27012).

On visits of many weeks' duration to Antipodes Island during summer 2002, 2003 and 2004, no goldfinches were observed (K. Walker pers. comm.). The colonisation attempt had evidently failed.

Our visit, in autumn 2001, may have coincided, serendipitously, with a rare invasion by goldfinches, or such invasions may be more common but pass undetected because nobody is present to see the birds before all die. Climatically, Antipodes Island is more benign than Auckland Islands on which goldfinches are established (Turbott 1990). Perhaps a scarcity of food, and competition for it, prevent goldfinches from establishing. Vertebrate seed-eaters on Antipodes Island comprise the two species of parakeet (*Cyanoramphus*), redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) and mouse (*Mus musculus*), the former being common, the latter abundant in autumn, but the redpoll scarce. Perhaps also the virtual absence of goldfinches' favoured foods (introduced weed seeds) on this isolated and pristine archipelago, and the presence of a competitor for such foods, the scarce redpoll, have caused and will cause future colonisation attempts by goldfinches to fail.

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