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SHORT NOTE

An aggressive interaction between a North Island fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata vealeae*) and a spotless crane (*Porzana tabuensis*)

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Awhitu Regional Park (37°06' S, 174°39' E) on Manukau Harbour's southern shore is 114 ha in area, approximately half of which is mixed wetland habitats, ranging from tidal saltmarsh areas, through to brackish and freshwater areas. While surveying North Island fernbirds (*Bowdleria punctata vealeae*) there on 21-24 January, 2003, I observed an aggressive interaction between a fernbird and a spotless crane (*Porzana tabuensis*).

I had played a 30 second sequence of a recorded call to elicit an initial response from a fernbird and so determine territorial boundaries and the presence of mates and neighbours. A single fernbird responded with sharp chip contact calls and came into view approximately 6 m from me when its behaviour abruptly changed. It began to clap its bill together in a fast chitter, raised its crown feathers, quivered its wings while holding them out to the side and hopped to a dead manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) branch approximately 1 m above the understory. This response is typical of a fernbird that has detected an intruder in its territory (Parker 2002),

and I thought another fernbird was in the area. However, I heard a pip call and a spotless crane came into view and approached the fernbird. The fernbird continued its territorial display as the crane approached, but stayed in vegetation approximately 1 m above it. The crane followed below the fernbird and jumped up toward it in a lunging motion. The fernbird kept a short distance from the crane during the whole interaction, did not appear intimidated, and often hopped toward the crane, all the while maintaining an active territorial display. I observed this interaction for a period of 1-2 mins before both birds disappeared into the understory, the fernbird chittering for a further 30 seconds. The behaviour of this fernbird was very similar to that of a territorial fernbird I observed following a stoat at the Omaha Saltmarsh (Parker, 2002).

An aggressive interaction between a fernbird and a spotless crane has not previously been reported. Spotless crane are potential predators of fernbird, particularly when breeding, and this may have prompted the interaction. They are also potential competitors due to shared habitat and dietary overlap (Heather & Robertson, 1996).

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