

SHORT NOTE

The first record of the South Island fernbird (*Bowdleria p. punctata*)

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The French naturalists Quoy and Gaimard are credited with the European discovery of the South Is fernbird (*Bowdleria p. punctata*) in Tasman Bay in 1827. They described it in 1830 as *Synallaxis punctata* (Oliver 1955: 465).

James Cook visited Queen Charlotte Sound in the northern South Is of New Zealand on 3 occasions in the course of his 2nd voyage round the world, the 1st of those visits being from 18 May to 7 Jun 1773. With Cook on the *Resolution* were Reinhold Forster, the official naturalist on the voyage, and his son, George, as an assistant naturalist and natural history draughtsman (Beaglehole 1961).

One or both of the Forsters visited Long Island at least 3 times in the course of their 1st visit to Queen Charlotte Sound (Forster, in Hoare 1982: 280-294). The "sand larks" they shot on the island were the New Zealand pipit (*Anthus n. novaeseelandiae*), which Reinhold Forster described under the name *Alauda littorea* (Medway 1976). Long I also provided another *Alauda* that was new to the Forsters. Reinhold described it in his *Descriptiones Animalium*, a manuscript that he compiled as the voyage proceeded. It is clear from the position of the description in the manuscript that this other *Alauda* was collected during the Forsters' 1st visit to Queen Charlotte Sound. Reinhold Forster's description (Forster 1772-1775: I: 132) is as follows:

1773 Nova Zeelandia *Alauda*

98. *Alauda*

Alauda supra subferruginea maculis fuscis, subtus albida, rectricibus supra fuscis, subtus ferrugineis. Haec *Alaudae* species, est affinis *Motacillis*, sed ob rostrum magis cylindricum, ad *Alaudas* spectare videtur: at digitus posticus erat rectiusculus & vix digito longior: semper inter fruticeta latebat & celerrime cursitabat in insula vulgo *longa* appellata in Aestuario Reginae Charlottae.

Corpus magnitudine *A. littorae* vel minus.

Rostrum mandibulis aequalibus, cylindricum, *Lingua* bifida. *Pedes* albi, *digiti postici ungue* vix digito longiore. *Pileus, cervix, Dorsum, uropygium, tectrices superiores alarum & rectrices pennis ferrugineis*; at rachide & parva parte disci macula longitudinali fusca. *Gula, Jugulum, & pectus* albido fusca. *Abdomen & tectrices alarum* subtus, albida. *Hypochondria, Femora, Crissum* ochroleuca. *Linea superciliaris* a naribus ad nucham alba. *Remiges supra* saturate fuscae, margine tectaceo-griseo, subtus cano-fuscae. *Rectrices* subtus ferrugineae.

<i>Mensurae</i>	<i>unc</i>
Longitudo ab apice rostri in extremitatem caudae	7
" " a rostri apice ad oculi medium	½
Cauda	3

In 1844, Lichtenstein published an edited version of Forster's *Descriptiones Animalium* in which the above description is reproduced, but without the heading "1773. Nova Zeelandia. *Alauda*" (Lichtenstein 1844: 91-92). G.R. Gray (1844-1845: 7) referred to Forster's description of the *Alauda* as published in Lichtenstein, and gave the following English translation of part of it: "Upper surface and tail-feathers ferruginous, with longitudinal streaks of brown; fore part of the neck and breast whitish brown; abdomen nearly white; sides, thighs and vent ochraceous white; a line from each nostril over each eye to the nape white; quills deep brown, with testaceous grey margins. Length, 7 inches". Gray did not proffer an identification of the taxon described by Forster, but called it simply "*Anthus* ---- ?", as he did again several years later (Gray 1862).

Hutton (1871: 13) identified the *Alauda* described by Forster with *Anthus grayi*, Bonaparte. However, *Anthus grayi* of Bonaparte has nothing to do with the *Alauda* described by Forster from Queen Charlotte Sound. Bonaparte's name relates to the Falkland Is race of the correndera pipit *Anthus correndera grayi* Bonaparte, 1850. Finsch (1873) considered that most probably Forster's *Alauda* was only a dark specimen of the New Zealand pipit.

The morphological and plumage characters of the "*Alauda*" as described by Forster agree with those of the South Is fernbird. In addition, Forster observed that this bird was "semper inter fruticeta latebat": always hiding among the thickets. This secretive behaviour is characteristic of fernbirds. According to Percy Earl (in Gray 1844-1845: 5) the fernbird's usual haunts are "low bushes in marshy grounds or flax-swamps". There was habitat of this type on Long I in 1773, as is confirmed by George Forster (in Kahn 1968: 128) in his description of the island: "On its N.W. side we saw a fine beach, surrounding a little piece of flat land, of which the greatest part was marshy, and covered with various grasses; the rest was full of anti-scorbutics, and the New Zealand flax-plant (*phormium*), growing round some old abandoned huts of the natives". I am not aware of any records of fernbirds on Long I since the Forsters found them there in 1773.

Forster's description reproduced here is not accompanied by a specific name for the *Alauda* taxon he described. However, he did name it as "*Alauda (glareola)*" in the index to the volume of *Descriptiones Animalium* in which the description appears (Forster 1772-1775: I: 133). Neither this index, nor those of the other volumes of *Descriptiones Animalium*, was published by Lichtenstein (1844). It is reasonable to assume from the inclusion of the bracketed name *glareola* in the index that Forster intended, at least tentatively, to apply that specific name to this new *Alauda*. Accordingly, it is appropriate to do so here. As far as is known, this is the 1st publication of the combination *Alauda glareola*. In accordance with Recommendation 51E of the *International code of zoological nomenclature* (1999), the authorship of *Alauda glareola* is J.R. Forster in Medway (2009). *Alauda glareola* is a junior synonym of *Bowdleria p. punctata*. The type locality of the specimen on which

Forster based his description and name is Long I, Queen Charlotte Sound, South I, New Zealand.

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