

NORFOLK ISLAND GROUND-DOVE

Alopecoenas norfolkensis sp. nov.

Alopecoenas norfolkensis sp. nov. Name for the bird figured by John Hunter in *Collection of 100 original watercolours of Birds, Flowers, Fishes and Natives done during 1788–1790 in New South Wales*; pl. no. 89 in bound volume as 'Dove. Norfolk Island'. Formerly Norfolk Island, now extinct.

DESCRIPTION

There are no specimens of the Norfolk Island Ground-Dove, but from a figure drawn by John Hunter and titled 'Dove. Norfolk Island', with an annotation '½ of the Nat. Size' the following description of a presumed adult male can be made:

Length approximately 28 cm. Head to upper breast white; upperparts from hindneck to upper tail-coverts and tail rufous-brown; upper wing-coverts deep purple forming conspicuous 'shoulder-patch'; lower breast to under tail-coverts rufous-brown; bill black; iris dark brown or black; eyering reddish; legs and feet reddish-pink.

In my opinion, the drawing by Hunter, although not particularly life-like, is a reliable illustration of the adult male, and I strongly suspect that, as in some other *Alopecoenas* ground-doves, the head and neck to upper breast was brownish in adult females.

Hindwood (1965a) points out that, under the name *Columba norfolciensis*, Latham described three quite distinct birds, two of which have been identified as the Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* and the White-headed Pigeon *Columba leucomela*. It is his first description that has been applied to the Norfolk Island Ground-Dove, and it reads as follows:

Norfolk Pigeon. Length fourteen inches; head and neck, as far as the breast, white; from the last to the vent, black; back and wings deep dusky purple, with few darker markings; tail dull purple, with inner webs of the feathers dusky; bill black; legs red.

Goodwin (1983) notes that it is uncertain whether the bird depicted by Hunter is the bird described by Latham, discrepancies being due to different plumage phases or individual variation, or whether it is a different species. Because of ambiguity, Latham's name was formally suppressed by the International Committee on Zoological Nomenclature, so leaving the bird depicted by Hunter without a name (Opinion 2251, *Bull. Zool. Nomencl.* **67**: 192–193, June 2010).

GENERAL NOTES

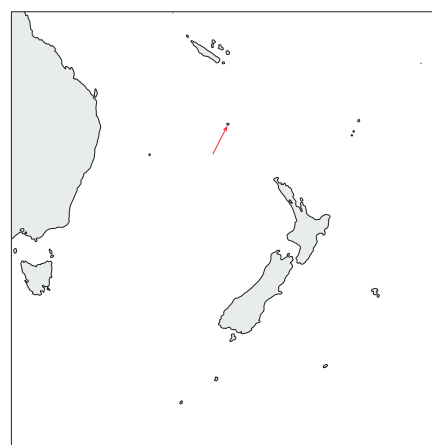
Meredith (1985) points out that fossil bones of *Alopecoenas* and *Chalcophaps* doves recovered in deposits on Norfolk and Nepean Islands, respectively, reveal that both were present prior to European settlement. The *Alopecoenas* bones are of at least three individuals (in Tennyson and Martinson 2006). Confirmatory evidence of a dove

or doves being present on Norfolk Island at the time of European settlement comes from contemporary writings (in Hindwood 1965a). In March 1788, soon after settlement, John Hunter wrote:

We saw pigeons, parrots, parroquets, doves, and a variety of other birds, in great numbers, and so very tame, that they might be knocked down with a stick.

In a letter written from the Island on 28 October 1788, and printed in *The Kentish Gazette* at Deal, England, on 6 June 1789, it is stated:

The wild fowl are pigeons, quails, doves, plovers, corlieus, parrots, paroquets and a black bird with a web foot that



OPPOSITE:

Drawing titled 'Dove. Norfolk Island' is by John Hunter, and is in *Collection of 100 original watercolours of Birds, Flowers, Fishes and Natives done during 1788–1790 in New South Wales*, being plate no. 89 in the bound volume. The specimen depicted is here designated as the holotype of *Alopecoenas norfolkensis* sp.