

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
Based on: Watola, G. 2009. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (2nd Edition)
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Updated and amended text supplied by George Watola, October, 2011.
Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)
Auckland Island rail: pp 114-115.

Auckland Island Rail *Lewinia muelleri* (Rothschild 1893), Endemic
1874 Auckland Island

Very confusing circumstances surround the discovery of this species. Falla (1967) discusses the two specimens of rail collected in the 19th century from Auckland Island. The first bird was purchased by A. von Hugel in December 1874 in Invercargill. This specimen was said to be "freshly skinned". Von Hugel referred to Captain Musgrave as the collector, but he was on Auckland Island in 1864-65. It seems more likely that he purchased the rail from the skipper of the *Mabel Jane*, which had just spent four months at the Auckland Islands

This specimen was identified as Lewin's Rail *Lewinia pectoralis* (*muelleri* was originally considered to be a subspecies of *pectoralis*), an Australian species, by Mathews & Iredale (1913), Greenway (1958) and Falla (1967). Falla (1967) considered the first specimen to be a probable male of Lewin's Rail, not readily separable from Tasmanian examples. Elliott et al. (1991) also thought that the von Hugel specimen was not *L. muelleri*, based on measurements. The Checklist Committee (OSNZ) (2010) however considered it was incorrectly identified and is indeed *L. muelleri*.

An Auckland Island Rail was then obtained by Baron von Mueller in Melbourne (from a visiting ship?) who forwarded it to the Stuttgart Museum, and then from there by Count von Berlepsch in 1893 to Rothschild who described *L. muelleri*. The type specimen is now lost.

This and Lewin's Rail are now generally considered to belong to the genus *Lewinia*, rather than the Indian Ocean *Dryolimnas*.