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Tree martin: pp 208-209.

Tree Martin *Petrochelidon nigricans nigricans* (Vieillot 1817), Vagrant (40)
Summer 1851 Wakapuaka, Nelson
December 2001 Norfolk Island

F. Jollie saw a “flight of swallows” at Wakapuaka and shot one in summer 1851. It was described to Buller by Jollie, but not seen by him. The specimen does not appear to be extant. The first verified specimen appears to be one shot by Mr Lea at Taupata, near “Cape Farewell” on 14/3/1856. It was seen by Buller, who confirmed the identification.

“IN the ‘Birds of New Zealand’ I have recorded two distinct occurrences of the Tree Swallow in this country as a visitant from Australia. In the summer of 1851, Mr. F. Jollie observed a flight of swallows at Wakapuaka, in the vicinity of Nelson, and succeeded in shooting one; and on the 14th March, 1856, a specimen was shot by Mr. Lea, at Taupata, near Cape Farewell. This is still preserved in the Otago Museum. It would appear from some observations made by the late Sir David Monro, at a meeting of this Society in February, 1875 that there have been other instances of its occurrence in Nelson. Having reference, no doubt, to the same bird, I have lately received the following interesting communication from a gentleman in Blenheim:— ‘On Sunday, the 9th instant, about two miles from Blenheim, on the bank of the Opawa River, I saw the first martin I have met with in New Zealand. The bird was hawking after insects close to the ground in a ploughed field. I was accompanied by two residents in Blenheim at the time, and we watched it closely for some time. It passed us at one time within a few yards. There was no mistaking either the appearance or the flight of the bird. It seemed to me more like the English house martin than the common Australian martin. It seemed, however, dingier in the black than the English bird, and rather smaller—more like the sand-martin, indeed. J. R. W. COOK’ ” (Buller 1878).

Tree Martins were later seen at Opaua River, Blenheim on 9/6/1878 and in February 1883. One was shot out of a flock of 6-7 at Grovetown, Blenheim in March 1883, and two were seen at Kaikoura in the same month. A report of breeding at Oamaru in 1892/93 may equally refer to Welcome Swallow.

There have been over 20 records since 1851, but some are poorly documented. A series of records in the 1970s has been disregarded in the latest two Checklists (1990 & 2010).