

REDISCOVERY OF THE MEGAPODE, *Aepyodius bruijnii*

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*Aepyodius bruijnii* Oustalet, a large and very peculiar species of megapode, has long been a 'lost species.' The few specimens in existence are all known to have been collected by the hunters of A. A. Bruijn, a resident of Ternate in the Moluccas, who was engaged in the business of supplying feathers to the Paris plumassiers. When he got unusual or curious birds they were disposed of to museums. As his hunters often visited various localities on a single trip the authenticity of the places of origin which he ascribed to his specimens was notoriously inexact.

In 1879, the first specimen of *Aepyodius bruijnii* was sold, through Léon Laglaize, to Oustalet at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. It was described in 1880 and its habitat was said to be the island of Waigeu, north-west of New Guinea. Bruijn's hunters managed to get a total of eleven specimens, but after that no more were seen. From Bruijn's day to this, *Aepyodius bruijnii* has remained a bird of mystery. Several expeditions have visited Waigeu, the last that of Georg Stein in 1931, and although the megapode was assiduously looked for, it was not found.

All this led to the natural conclusion that Bruijn's locality was wrong, that the bird had never come from Waigeu at all and must be looked for elsewhere, perhaps in the mountains of the Vogelkop on the mainland of New Guinea, on the island of Biak in Geelvink Bay, or in any other likely locality. Stein had carefully questioned the natives of Waigeu and they had answered quite positively that only one megapode (*Megapodius f. freycinet*) was known to them and that they had never seen or heard of a bird like *Aepyodius*. The latter is so distinct from *Megapodius* that they could not possibly confuse it, for it has a long wattle hanging from the neck and two additional ones hanging from the back of the head and besides, it is much larger (for colored plate see 'Annales des Sciences Naturelles,' Zool., 1881, pl. 33). This evidence seemed so positive that in the 'Check List of the Birds of the World' Peters said, "Range unknown, probably not Waigeu," and that voiced the feelings of everyone interested in the bird.

Last autumn the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia sent a native collector to Waigeu. He had been trained for a year and a half by the Denison-Crockett Expedition, which had made a trip to New Guinea for the Academy. The Academy needed a collection of Waigeu birds so when Joseph Kakiaij was sent, he was told to look for certain things, among which was a megapode with wattles. This was said more as a wishful thought than in the real hope that he would find it. The collection finally arrived this October, and among the last birds unpacked was a large black-

ish bird with chestnut and gray under parts, and wattles. It was *Aepypodius bruijnii*, the first specimen in over fifty years, and it proved that Bruijn's locality was correct.

There are in all twelve known specimens: two in Paris, one in the British Museum, one in the Turati collection in Italy, seven in the Rothschild collection in New York and now one in the Academy of Natural Sciences.

The bird must be very rare and shy for in all there have been ten expeditions to Waigeu, and until Joseph Kakiaij secured the present specimen no one but the hunters of Bruijn succeeded in getting it.

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