

Australasian Birdlife

a look at the bird world of the South Pacific
region along zoogeographical lines

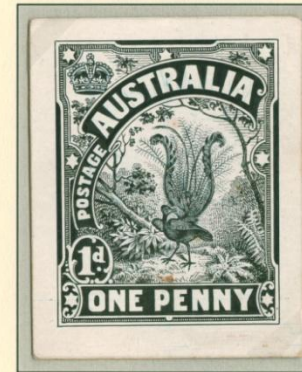


This is the final artist's drawing for the United Nations (New York) 1997 stamp issue highlighting endangered species.

The Australian Pink Cockatoo, who has become very scarce over the past decades, is a symbol of both, of the striking uniqueness of the South Pacific bird world and of its vulnerability.

1. **Australasia - a definition from the zoogeographical point of view** (6 pages)
 - 1.1 *Australasia has its own unique ornithological character*
 - 1.2 *The distribution areas of unique bird groups determine avifauna demarcation*
 - 1.3 *Australasia constitutes the most secluded of all avifaunas*
 - 1.4 *The Sunda archipelago forms the boundary of the Australasian bird world*

THE FAMOUS "TANNENBERG" ESSAY:



Competition essay (1911) for the first Australian stamp issue. The original design has been photographically reduced down to the size of the projected stamp.



a unique Australian bird, shaped in evolution's studio: On the floor of the Australian rain-forests the Lyrebird evolved from a common songbird into a creature of pheasant-like shape and behaviour.

Part I: Adaptation to the living conditions: a process lasting millions of years

2. **The long history of settlement: birds conquer the Australasian region** (16 pages)
 - 2.1 *Land birds from Asia invade Australia via the Sunda Islands*
 - 2.2 *Seabirds and Waders from far afield ask for asylum along the South Pacific coastlines*
 - 2.3 *But this immigrants aren't there first: they encounter established bird groups from Gondwanaland*
 - 2.4 *The most successful settlers spread out over all the Australasian islands*
3. **In Evolution's studio: an independent avifauna gradually takes shape** (12 pages)
 - 3.1 *Dispersion over the many islands creates isolated populations*
 - 3.2 *This isolation provides a launching pad for evolution by allowing birds to undergo change*
 - 3.3 *As a result, new regional avifaunas, constituted by optimally adapted species, come into existence*
4. **The state of play: regional bird worlds adapted to their habitats** (21 pages)
 - 4.1 *The Australian region resembles a bioclimatic three-flat tenement*
 - 4.2 *The Papuan region leads the fashion parade in colour and shape*
 - 4.3 *The New Zealand region forms a bird world between the winds*
 - 4.4 *The Polynesian region remains birds' islands of paradise until man arrives*



unaccepted handpainted competition essay for the 1898 Pictorial issue

The Maoris greet the first European settlers - wearing feather cloaks and Huia feathers in their hair.



Part II: The balance is rapidly upset: dramatic changes caused by man

5. **Arrival of man has serious impact on birds' living conditions** (18 pages)
 - 5.1 *First humans colonize the Australasian region and meet a rich bird world there*
 - 5.2 *Chance of food and feathers encourages the South Sea people to go a-hunting*
 - 5.3 *Europeans arrive and discover the bird world for the second time*
 - 5.4 *Land exploitation benefiting the new settlers leads to the destruction of native habitats*
 - 5.5 *Introduced predators and competitors cause an unaccustomed struggle for survival*
6. **Extinction and replacement of native birds are the sad effects of man's settlement** (15 pages)
 - 6.1 *The most vulnerable species become extinct:*
 - 6.2 *This upsets ecological balance in traditional habitats*
 - 6.3 *New, manmade habitats provide a bridgehead for introduced birds*
 - 6.4 *Different motives underlie introduction of alien bird species*
 - 6.5 *This introduced birds not only occupy the free niches but start to replace the native avifauna*
7. **A glimmer of hope? Nature conservancy in the South Pacific** (6 pages)
 - 7.1 *The uniqueness of the long-established avifauna provides motivation to protect it*
 - 7.2 *Environmental protection rescues many birds' habitats*
 - 7.3 *Specific measures assist endangered species*

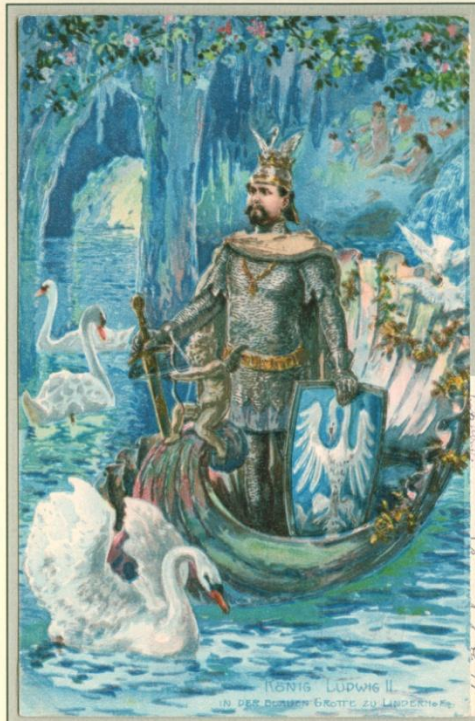
1. Australasia - a definition from the zoogeographical point of view

1.1 Australasia has its own unique ornithological character



15 XI 189

2 0 4 6 2



Bavarian stationery, stamp imprint on private order
ONLY FOUR COPIES RECORDED

variety:
greenish cyan-blue colour missing
Three sheets escaped the control routines at the printers creating the most remarkable variety of Norwegian stamps post WW II. Two of this sheets, numbered 20463 and 20464, showed this variety on all 100 stamps, the third just over the upper six rows. The marginal block of 20 shown here comes from the latter sheet and is today with 12 colour varieties the LARGEST REMAINING UNIT after the three sheets have been split.

"All swans are white".
Up until the 18th century, this sentence could be found in most logics manuals as an example for an irrefutable truth.

How must the early Australian settlers have felt when they suddenly encountered dark, almost black variants ...

... of the ever snow-white creature symbolic of kings and rulers?



1860 Perkins & Bacon die proof for the first stamp printed locally in Western Australia

THREE EXAMPLES OF THIS IMPORTANT PROOF ARE KNOWN IN PRIVATE HANDS.

The settlers were at least so impressed that they chose to have the first stamps issued for their colony of Western Australia depicting Black Swans instead of the usual portraits of the sovereign or symbols of sovereignty.

The ship letter sent back home to England depicts these remarkable unusual bird.



For long time, this 6d stamp in golden bronze colour was famous for being the rarest regular stamp of Western Australia. But now it is considered to be a colour variant of the 1857 black bronze stamp and not a different issue: The bronze ink had possibly not been distributed equally over the printing plate so that different shades from black bronze to golden bronze came into existence.

Weird and wonderful - Australasia through the eyes of a bird-watcher

Let us view Australasia through the eyes of a bird-watcher: a first glance through our binoculars shows ...



... stop - the glasses are not properly adjusted - ...

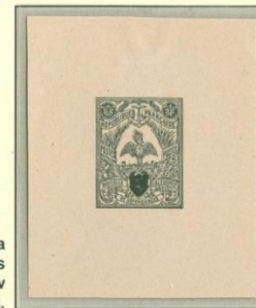


... shows us an abundance of unique birds that occur solely in the South Pacific region.



In Australia we see Parrots sporting remarkable head-dress, ...

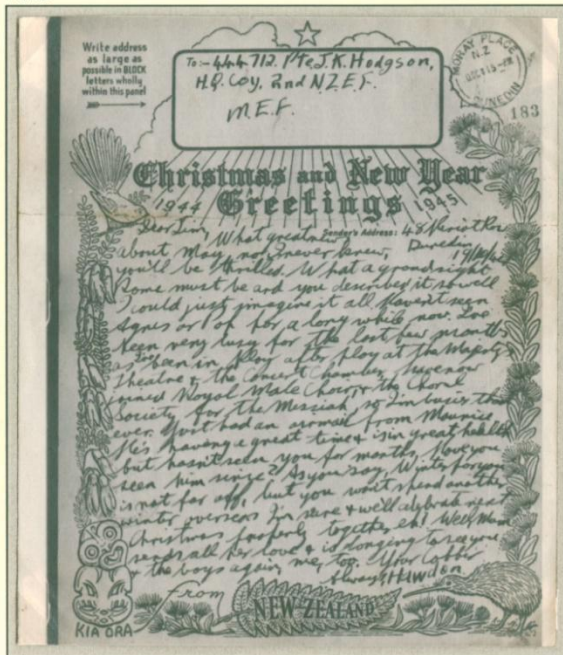
imperforated at bottom
SIX COPIES KNOWN, originating from three different sheets with two bottom strips of five each



... and on New Caledonia flightless Kagus, which use their wings merely to create a play of light and shadow so as to startle and disturb small animals.

master die proof of the originally proposed design for the 1905 definitive stamps (shown below)

Fantail



In New Zealand we find a trick similar to the Kagu's being employed by the Fantails,

whilst another flightless bird, namely the Kiwi, uses its long beak, which is sensitive to smell, to poke around in search of worms and insects.

(Some of this birds are very difficult to watch in the wild. If you are unsuccessful, you can try a museum instead: Below, for example, you see a stuffed Kagu specimen from the local museum of Nouméa.)

Kiwi



Hence, the postmark NOUMEA meets with the requirements for maximum cards.

Christmas airgraph, transported as microfilm for both, security reasons and saving cargo space

Notogaea - the ornithological commonwealth of the Australasian region



The scientific name "Notogaea" derives from the Greek word for the South Wind ("Notos") and means "the land in the south".



In addition to the core continent of Australia, it includes New Guinea, New Zealand and the South Sea archipelagos. For longer than any other of the realms, Australasia has been separated by the oceans from the other great continental land masses.

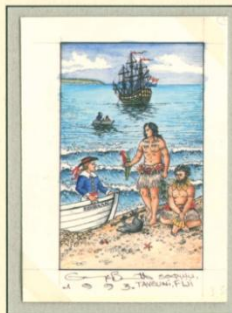
This explains the many unique bird species that are to be found here.

An abundance of Parrot species dominate the South Pacific bird world. This discovery led early ornithologists to name Australasia "Psittagea" (= "Parrotland").

KARRAKATTA = Red-tailed Black Cockatoo



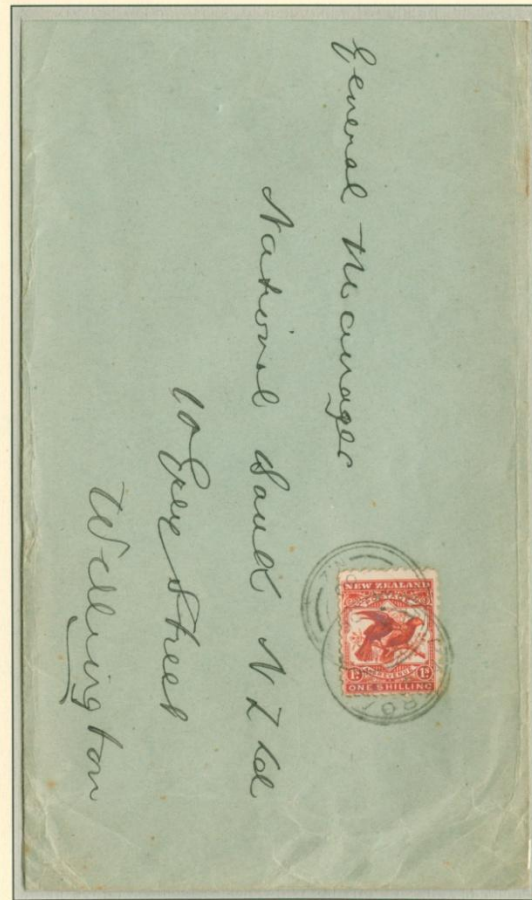
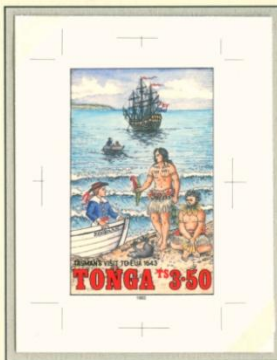
mailbag seal, used as temporary relief postmark
UNIQUE ON REGISTERED LETTER
post office 1922 - 1964



This cromalin proof for a Tongan stamp issue was taken directly from the artwork designed by George Bennett.

THE POSTAL ARCHIVE OF TONGA RECEIVED SUCH UNUSUAL CROMALIN PROOFS ONLY FOR THE 1993 ISSUE.

The text overlay was added in a second stage.



THE ONLY KNOWN SINGLE FRANKING OF ANY OF THE 1898-1907
1/- KAKA & KEA PARROTS DEFINITIVE STAMP ISSUES