

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The publication date, August 1797, is confirmed by notes and advertisements in *The Times* on Monday 21 August (issue 3978: 4) and Wednesday 23 August (issue 3980: 1).

<sup>2</sup> The same name is engraved on the plate.

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## Charles Darwin's tinamou egg

The University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge (UMZC), has a collection of about twenty thousand birds' eggs, largely collected by the oologist John Wolley (1823–1859) in Scandinavia and Alfred Newton (1829–1907), Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy from 1866 to 1907 (Newton 1860, 1867–1907; Wollaston 1921). Over the past decade the eggs have been curated, including re-storage in new metal-cased cabinets. Late in 2008, work started on Newton's reserve collections that mostly comprise broken or duplicate eggs, where LW first noticed the egg collected by Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882) during his famous voyage on H. M. S. *Beagle*.

The newly recognized egg is marked on the shell: “v.p. 2107 C. Darwin” (Figure 1), in which “v.p. 2107” refers to a page in one of Newton's egg notebooks.<sup>1</sup> The last (fourth) entry on this page is dated 9 June 1872 and reveals that the “C. Darwin” inscribed on the egg was written by Newton rather than by Darwin himself:

“v.p. 2107” – C. Darwin” – by me. One egg received through Frank Darwin having been sent to me by his father who said he got it at Maldonado and that it belonged to the “Common Tinamou” of those parts – what the species is I do not know. The great man put it into too small a box & hence it's unhappy state. –

The egg, measuring 46 mm by 30 mm, is chocolate brown in colour with a glossy surface. It has a large meandering crack, mentioned by Newton, running lengthways along it. The size, colour and characteristic glossy surface, together with the collection locality indicate a species of tinamou, the spotted nothura, *Nothura maculosa maculosa* (Temminck, 1815).<sup>2</sup> Darwin (in Gould 1841: 119) listed the bird under the synonym *Nothura major* Wagler, 1827



Figure 1. Egg of a spotted nothura, *Nothura maculosa*, collected by Charles Darwin in Maldonado in 1833, preserved in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge (approximately natural size, photograph © Russell Stebbings).

in *The zoology of the voyage of H. M. S. Beagle*, stating that “these birds are very common on the northern shores of the Plata” and that “the egg of this species, I believe, closely resembles that of the two following [*Nothura minor* and *N. perdicaria*].” Darwin was in the general region of Maldonado on the Rio Plata in Uruguay from 28 April to 23 July 1833. During this period he collected a skin of the *Nothura* listed in his zoology notes under number 1224 (Keynes 2000: 154) and now preserved in the Natural History Museum at Tring (no. 1855.12.18.34). An egg, listed in the margin of the entry in the zoology notes with number 1378, is likely to be the one now in UMZC.

In his comprehensive review of the bird collections made by Charles Darwin during the journey of the *Beagle*, Steinheimer (2004) found that Darwin returned with 468 bird skins, ten parts of the lesser rhea (*Rhea pennata*), the nests and eggs of 16 taxa, and 14 whole birds and four parts of specimens in alcohol. None of the eggs was then known to have survived.

The resurfacing of this egg at UMZC coincided with the commemorations at the University of Cambridge of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin (1809–1882). UMZC therefore could add another specimen collected by Darwin to those previously identified, including finches, fishes, two octopuses from Cape Verde, microscope slides of Cirripedes and a collection of beetles accumulated as an undergraduate at Cambridge (Friday 2009a, 2009b; van Wyhe 2009).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The page “v.p. 2107” occurs in Alfred Newton’s egg journal, a series of twelve notebooks with manuscript entries dated between 1857 and 1906. In this series, volume 10 (measuring 16 × 20 cm) has entries for eggs 2067 to 2328. The notebook is part of the listing numbered GB433 of Alfred Newton’s papers in UMZC as catalogued by Kees Rookmaaker on [www.archiveshub.ac.uk](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk). There is no suggestion that the original box used by Darwin was either presented to or preserved in the museum.

<sup>2</sup> The egg was compared with eggs of different species of Tinamou by Douglas G. D. Russell, Curator: Bird Group, Natural History Museum, Tring. Reference was made to Schönwetter (1960).

<sup>3</sup> Data on all vertebrate specimens are available on the museum's website through a searchable database: [www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/museum](http://www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/museum).

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## Alfred Russel Wallace notes 1: authorship of two early works

For the past couple of years we have been investigating some questions regarding the early life and writings of the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913). These notes pull together the results of this work, various elements of which were carried out by the authors (identified hereafter by our initials), largely as individual efforts. This discussion focuses on Wallace's supposed authorship of two works published in 1856 and 1857.

In a recent note CHS discussed Wallace's temporary adoption of a journalistic hat (Smith 2008), noting two articles, "A new kind of baby" and "The Dyaks" which had appeared in *Chambers's journal* as unsigned communications, and why there was reason to believe Wallace had written them. They are in my bibliography of Wallace publications (Smith 1991).<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the note's publication I was contacted by MT, who informed me that nineteenth-century records of payments made to authors by W. & R. Chambers Ltd. survive in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. MT agreed to look at these records. With a renewed interest in the question I did some more investigating on my own, and before hearing back from MT discovered a note apparently written by Wallace himself that is part of the Wallace collection at the Natural History Museum, London, that has been mounted online for public viewing. The note is a list of pre-1862 articles that Wallace claimed to have authored, and "A new kind of baby" was included.<sup>2</sup>