

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE DIET OF  
THE BLUE DUCK, *HYMENOLAIMUS MALACORHYNCHOS*

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ABSTRACT

The blue duck, *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus* is shown to include Myriapoda, Blephariceridae and Empididae in its diet.

Fordyce and Tunnicliffe (1973) have listed the arthropod food taken by the blue duck. With the exception of mites, this food apparently consists entirely of larval insects, but Kear and Burton (1971) recovered one specimen of an adult dipteran and coleopteran from blue ducks.

While examining the Blephariceridae (Diptera) collection in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) during May 1973, I discovered two late fourth instar blepharicerid larvae in a tube with the following note:

"Found 9.V.02 in Bird Room, Brit.Mus.Nat.Hist. between tongue and roof of mouth of nestling *Hymenolaimus* from Geraldine, Canterbury, New Zealand. The suckers were attached to the palate of the duckling, to which two suckers from each specimen were left adhering when the larvae were removed. Two impressions on the tongue of the duckling showed where the backs of the larvae had been resting.

Contents of the gizzard of duckling small stones, two legs of aquatic larvae (dragon fly or beetle) and a fragment of a Myriopod. - No trace of any more of these larvae in the gizzard.

E.E. Auston 9.v.02"

The blepharicerid larvae were of *Neocurupira hudsoni*. No blepharicerids have been reported from Geraldine (Craig 1966), but *N. hudsoni* is widespread in the South Island and it is not surprising for it to occur at Geraldine.

By coincidence I observed, for 20 minutes, a female blue duck feeding at Bealey Chasm, Arthur's Pass National Park, 20 Jan. 1974. The duck was swimming along the edges of pools below cascades, feeding off insects on the wet rocks and on the water surface. It neither sieved the water nor dived under the water, both typical feeding behaviours described by Kear and Burton (1971). A sweep-net collection of insects flying above the pools revealed Blephariceridae and Empididae adults. Only

blepharicerid larvae were present on the wet rocks.

These brief observations extend the known diversity of the blue duck diet and begin to indicate that, although caddis larvae may be the predominant arthropod food taken (Kear and Burton 1971), blue ducks are opportunists in food selection.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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