

Star from 1927 to 1936. In 1932, while staying on the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, he made a collection of birds that now contributes to Auckland Museum's important Pacific Islands collection.

As a young man, Pycroft had the distinction of having eaten a huia. Skilled in taxidermy, he had been sent a huia for mounting. After skinning it he handed its body to his landlady and had her cook it.

While sorting Pacific birds my eye was drawn to skins from the Solomon Islands that were exquisitely prepared. All were collected by J.E. Green, who had been on active service with the U.S. Army on Guadalcanal during World War Two. He had been a preparator at a Californian museum, and so, amid the horrors of the jungle war, he had collected and prepared birds as a path to sanity. During rest and recreation in Auckland he presented his birds to Auckland Museum.

A young sailor in the Royal New

Display of brown kiwis completed for the former Princes Street building around 1916.

Zealand Navy also collected birds while on war-time service in the Solomons and gave them to Auckland Museum. Peter Bull went on to a long career as an ecologist in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

North American birds

Between about 1875 and 1905, Auckland Museum's Curator, Thomas Cheeseman, arranged major exchanges of bird specimens with museums and collectors around the world. Of special interest were exchanges with the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. The hundreds of bird skins received were fully labelled. Many were collected in the 'Wild West' during a time of Federal Government exploration, often by army personnel at frontier outposts. Many labels carry the names of lengthy expeditions, such as the 'U.S. Northern Boundary Survey 1874' and 'Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian'. Ornithological collecting in the pristine wilderness was often an antidote to loneliness and boredom.

Of the Smithsonian collectors

represented among the Auckland Museum birds are several well-known ornithologists of the day, like Elliott Coues (a U.S. Army surgeon) and Henry Henshaw. These two once raced each other, and found that each could prepare a sparrow skin in under two minutes.

With frivolity there also came danger. Robert Shufeldt (a scholar who published on the osteology of the kea) drowned in the Ohio River near his home, and Charles McKay drowned in Alaska. In the Dakotas in 1864, Sergeant John Feilner galloped ahead of his column in his eagerness to collect, and while dismounted at a stream was surprised by Sioux warriors and killed. Edward Nelson endured climatic hardship in western Alaska, alleviated



Articulated bird skeletons in storage at Auckland War Memorial Museum.

somewhat whenever he paid Eskimo women to sleep in his wet clothes so the garments would be dry by morning!

Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt (1858-1919), who inspired the teddy bear, was a hunter, collector and conservationist. He gave his bird specimens to the Smithsonian, which is how nine of them came to Auckland Museum. As Governor of New York he closed down factories that used bird feathers in the fashion trade. During his presidential term (1901-9) he achieved more for wildlife protection than any previous president, creating numerous national parks and reserves.

Today museums receive a steady stream of birds, mostly those that have crashed into windows or been found dead by the roadside, and we always record the collector. There are regular collectors who understand the importance of bird collections and take trouble to save and label specimens for us. So the collecting goes on, and one day these birds too may tell a story to future generations through the names of their collectors.

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