



Towards the resolution of long-standing issues regarding the birds collected during the Baudin expedition to Australia and Timor (1800-1804): the discrepancy in the number of birds collected and their subsequent handling

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Abstract. This paper is a follow-up of Jansen (2014) and provides details on discrepancies between the actual number of bird specimens collected on the Baudin expedition (1800-1834) in both the literature as well as in archives and provides a review of how specimens were treated after their arrival and how they were documented. Louis Dufresne (1752-1832) played a key role in the documentation of such specimens; although only a taxidermist in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris, his role gained significance due to the lack of a curator specifically devoted to birds at that time in the Muséum.

Key words. Dufresne, Baudin, Lesueur, MNHN, birds, taxidermy.

INTRODUCTION

No less than 75+ bird taxa were described as new (including synonyms) as a result of the specimens brought back by the Baudin expedition (1800-1804) on the ships *Le Géographe* and *Le Naturaliste*, involving no less than 105+ type specimens in total. This expedition can therefore be ranked as one of the most successful expeditions in the 19th century. The expedition docked at multiple locations in Australia and at Tenerife (Canary Islands), Cape Town (South Africa), Mauritius and Timor (see Jansen 2014).

At least 255 birds were donated to or purchased during the expedition (Jansen 2014), but the actual number might be much higher, but poor documentation hinders establishing the exact number. The remainder was collected by crew members of the expedition, in particular Stanislaus Levillain, René Maugé de Cely and Charles Alexandre Lesueur. In 1856, 364 birds collected on the Baudin expedition (including those collected by Jean Macé (27 birds) and Jean-Baptiste Dumont (11 birds) (Jansen 2015, 2016)) were still in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, France (hereafter MNHN); by 2014, this number had dwindled to roughly 295.

The exact number of specimens collected during the entire expedition, including donations and purchases, is speculative and the various published sources disagree. The same applies for the processing and taxidermy of specimens after arrival. This paper aims to clarify these matters.

Documents were studied at the MNHN on 25 April 2007, 15-17 June 2011, 12-13 June 2012, 2-12 April 2013, 16-20 February 2015 and 8-10 February 2016; the MNHN library on 14 March 2012, 5, 8 April 2013 and 17 February 2015; the Archives Nationales on 18 February 2015 and 9 February 2016; and in Le Havre on 27 June 2013 and 21 May 2015.

NUMBER OF SPECIMENS COLLECTED

Authors disagree on the number of bird specimens collected on the Baudin expedition. Jussieu (1804: 10), Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1809: 88) and Jansen (2014: 6) state 912 birds, Girard (1856: 134) gives 803 birds from 279 species, Bartle (1993) mentions “nearly 1000 bird skins”, and Jansen (2015: 89), 1021 specimens.

Various lists exist, and for the sake of completeness, all known unpublished documents that record the number of specimens brought back by the Baudin expedition found in the archives are reviewed here:

Document 1

A note written by Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire to the director of the museum dated 29 June 1803 (Archives National, Série Muséum, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AJ/15/590), in which he reports the number of birds (599 individuals, 206 species) and mammals (79 individuals, 32 species) brought back by *Le Naturaliste*, which docked in Le Havre at 3 June 1803. He further remarks:

“All of the preparator-artists in the Museum are working on mounting the mammals: the preparation of these animals will not incur any additional expense.

I have given a portion of the birds to be mounted according to the decision of the Assembly: I have made a choice of what needed to be preserved for mounting: the number amounts to 290: this number surpasses that of the species, given that it is necessary to mount the male, female and often the young of the same species.

I have just packed the duplicates, which comes to a number of 309 birds: the administration will be able to dispose of them in favor of whoever is concerned; the separation of these birds cannot hurt us in any way.

Paris, this 10 Messidor, Year 11 [= 29 June 1803]”.

This note is annotated at the top of the page in a different hand with the date 19 Thermidor an 11 (= 2 August 1803), evidently added after it was received by the Museum director.

Document 2

An inventory drafted by François Péron on 25 March 1804, of the zoological specimens collected between 1 Frimaire an XI (= 22 November 1802) and 1 Pluviose an XII (= 22 January 1804), and off-loaded from the *Le Géographe* (arrived 24 March 1804), lists



Fig. 1. White-winged Triller *Lalage suerii* [MNHN-ZO-2012-683]. Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 3 April 2013 (© MNHN).

422 birds and 110 mammals (Archives National, Série Muséum, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AJ/15/592). An identical inventory at Lorient, drafted by Milius, captain of the *Le Géographe* at the time of its return, is in le Hâvre (La Bibliothèque centrale du Muséum national d'histoire naturelle: Letter 305; Muséum d'Histoire naturelle, le Hâvre, France, 210 21). Whether one inventory was copied from the other, and if so, which was drafted first, is unknown.

Document 3

This inventory, entitled “Expédition Française de Découvertes. Tableau des Oiseaux” and dated 8 Messidor an XII (= 27 June 1804) includes two lists of the birds brought back by both ships of the expedition (Archives National, Série Muséum, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AJ/15/592). In the first list, “Récapitulation” (“Summary”), the birds brought back are broken down into seven taxonomic divisions (birds of prey, waterbirds, passerines, etc.), for a total of 289 species and 804 specimens. In the second list, “Etat où se trouvent les Oiseaux” (“Account of where the birds are found”), the following numbers are listed: 325 (mounted for the galleries in the museum), 478 (in skins not mounted), 85 (donated to the Empress), 5 (exchanged with Brongniard and Faujas) and 19 (living at Malmaison or the Museum menagerie), for a total of 912 specimens. Below this table, a separate line reads: “Total de le oiseaux qui manquèrent aux galléries 403 Individués” (“Total of

the birds that were [previously] lacking from the galleries 403 individuals”). Evidently, the “Récapitulation” table includes only the totals from the first two lines of the “Etat” table, plus one (804 vs 803 (325 + 478)). A separate inventory, “Expédition Française de Découvertes. Mammifères”, dated 8 Messidor an XII (= 27 June 1804), shows that 125 mammals also entered the collection.

Document 4

A long letter on the expedition by François Péron dated 8 Messidor an XII (= 27 June 1804) shows a table that mentions 912 bird-specimens, 289 species and 144 new species (Copy at Archives National, Série Muséum, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AJ/15/596).

Document 5

A list, dated 4 Vendémiaire an XIII (= 26 September 1804), notes that 178 birds were given to “S.M. l’Impératrice” from the ‘voyage de découvertes’, as well as “a portion of the shells” (Archives National, Série Muséum, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AJ/15/593). The 178 birds probably included 147 expedition birds (see Document 10, below). It also notes that the Baudin expedition “has provided us with 912 birds, of which 403 have been chosen for the galleries.”

Document 6

An undated list (ca. 1804), entitled ‘Tableau des Oiseaux’, mentions 766 specimens from 248 species (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 210 05).

Document 7

An undated sheet of paper (ca. 1804) mentions 930 birds and 124 mammals (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 210 18).

Document 8

A 3-page list, drafted by Louis Dufresne to E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and dated 7 Messidor an XII (= 26 April 1804), lists 75 genera (with the number of species and specimens per genus), totalling 297 species and 803 specimens. On the last page, two tables of summaries are included. In the first table, titled “Montant”, four lines list the total number of birds that entered the museum (803), birds from the expedition given to the Empress (85 (of a total of 116 given to “Sa Majesté”), birds exchanged with Brougniard and Faujas (5), and birds living at Malmaison and in the Museum menagerie (19), for a total of 912 birds. The second table, titled “Employ”, has five lines. The last three lines repeat the information and figures in the table above, but the first two lines list the number of birds mounted in the Museum galleries (325) and the number of unmounted skins (478). The last two figures, 325 and 478, add up to the figure in the first line of the first table, 803. In the margin alongside the two tables is written: “Total des oiseaux qui manquèrent à la Collection du muséum 403, individués” (“Total of the birds [previously] absent from the Museum collection 403 individuals”) (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 26 April 1804, 210 36).

Document 9

A small undated (ca. 1804) sheet of paper records: “number of birds / 288 species and



Fig. 2. Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna* [MNHN-MO-ZO-2003-3649]. Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 18 February 2015 (© MNHN).

895 individuals / from the expedition of the two corvettes - / of this number 350 individuals were [previously] absent from the collection of the Imperial museum.” (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 210 38).

Document 10

This 3-page list (undated, ca. 1804), is very similar to Document 8. It also lists 75 genera, with the number of species and specimens recorded per genus, totalling 297 species and 803 individuals. There are also two tables on the last page. In the first table are four lines recording the total number of specimens (803), those given to Mme. Bonaparte (85), those given to Brongiard and Faujas (5), and those living at Malmaison and the museum (19), for a total of 912 birds. To the left of this figure are two lines: “plus trente oiseaux envoyé de l’île de France par M. Dumont / d aux ce nombre 20, ont été choisée pour les galeries -” (“over 30 birds sent from the Île de France by M. Dumont / of this number 20 have been chosen for the galleries”). Below this table, as in List 4, is a table entitled “Employ”, listing the number of birds mounted for the galleries (325), the remaining number in skins (478) (which together add up to 803, the total number of specimens noted above), those living (19), those given to Mme. Bonaparte (85, out of a total of 116 given to her), and to Faujas and Brongniard (5), for a total again of 912 birds. Below this table are three additional lines: “choisée le 7 messidor 62 pour S.M. l’impératrice / plus choisée pour le muséum 78. / de la Collection Dumont ile de frn 20” (62 chosen on the 7 messidor [= 27 June] for H.M.the Empress / 78 more chosen for the museum / 20 from the Île de France Dumont Collection”). Evidently, on 27 June 1804, 62 more expedition birds were chosen to send to Josephine; these, added to the 116 already chosen for her, brought the total up to 178 birds, as noted in Document 5. On the same date, 78 more expedition birds were chosen for the galleries; these, added to the 325 birds that had already been mounted for

the galleries brought the total up to 403, the number of birds (specimens) noted in Documents 5 and 8 as having been previously absent from (i.e. new to) and chosen for the Museum galleries. (Archives du laboratoire de zoologie Mammifères et Oiseaux MNHN: undated Ms).

Document 11

Another 3-page list (undated, ca. 1804) lists 75 genera, with the number of species and specimens for each genus, totalling 297 species and 803 individuals (specimens). At a later date, the names of species and the registration numbers of specimens were added in a different hand (Archives du laboratoire de zoologie Mammifères et Oiseaux MNHN: undated Ms).

Document 12

A undated list (ca. 1804) of the “objets rapportés” by Perón and Lesueur, probably written by Dufresne and included with a letter by François Péron, notes 912 birds, 289 species and 144 new species (La Bibliothèque centrale du Muséum national d’histoire naturelle: Letter 2528)

TAXIDERMISTRY

Birds collected on the expedition arrived as prepared skins in France, and were subsequently mounted by the museum’s taxidermists. Birds were mounted not only in the museum, but also in the taxidermists’ homes, as shown by various communications to the museum. In order to document the progress of turning the Baudin expedition skins into mounts and other activities in the museum, Dufresne made weekly reports to his director, Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Although birds are only randomly described in these reports, they give an idea of what was collected. Dufresne subsequently noted available data – most likely communicated directly by Lesueur and Perón to Dufresne – on the pedestal underside, to be later transcribed onto pedestal labels and into the acquisition books (drafted ca. 1854). Other taxidermists responsible for some of the mounts include M. Perefile and M. Charpeutir. The majority of the weekly reports consulted are in the Archives Nationales in Pierrefit-sur-Sienne (AJ/15/590-596 up to 25 June 1806), with some undocumented reports in the Laboratoire at the Muséum National d’Histoire naturelle in Paris, however, some are lacking and have not been traced by author.

1803

7 June: *Le Naturaliste* arrives in France.

20 July: Birds from *Le Naturaliste* arrive in the MNHN, as reported by Dufresne for the week 18-25 July.

18-25 July: Dufresne mounts a large (brownish) albatross *Diomedeidae ssp* and a giant petrel *Macronectes ssp*. By 25 July, the three MNHN taxidermists had already mounted 64 birds from the Baudin expedition (including 14 pigeons). Dufresne mounted nearly half (30) of these.

2 August: Dufresne makes an inventory of the *Le Naturaliste*. Living birds brought back on the *Naturaliste* include: Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* (1) (3 live young Emus loaded

aboard *Le Naturaliste* at Port Jackson died en route), Southern Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* (1), Ostrich *Struthio camelus* (1), guinea fowl (2), rails (2), quails (2), Black Swan *Cygnus ater* (2), Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* (1), Cape Barren Goose? *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* (1), Common Bronzewing *Phaps elegans* (2), parrots and parakeets (?), and Tongan Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus porphyraceus* (2) (Jangoux et al 2010).

1-7 September: Dufresne mounts a Black Swan, a Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor* and a Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae* (?).

8-14 September: A Brahmy Kite *Haliastur indus*, a Brown Falcon *Falco berigora* and a Grey Goshawk are mounted. No less than 100 birds are reported to have been mounted so far.

21 September: No less than 161 expedition birds had been mounted already, with at least 117 birds sent to Empress Josephine.

19-26 October: Four shorebirds, an avocet *Recurvirostra ssp*, a drongo *Dicruridae ssp*, a (bronze) starling and a Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* are mounted.

27 October-2 November: An albatross, a giant petrel, a gull, a “blackbird”, a “Cardinal”, an Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis* are mounted.

3-9 November: An Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus* collected by Maugé, two kites collected at Timor, two passerines, and an unknown bird are mounted.

8-16 November: An unknown eagle species, four ducks and a Brown Falcon are mounted.

17-21 November: Two terns, an ibis, a whitish gull, a brown gannet, a ‘godwit’, a gull, a Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*, a thick-knee, a green pigeon, three ‘Flycatchers’, an avocet and a Hardhead *Aythya australis* are mounted.

22-29 November: Three ducks, a “good-looking” cormorant and a Brown Falcon are mounted.

30 November-6 December: A Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio*, a Bush Thick-knee *Burhinus grallarius*, an Australian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*, a heron, three swallows/martins, two ‘Flycatchers’ and a sunbird (with a yellow eyebrow) are mounted.

8-14 December: A Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*, a cormorant, an Australian Gannet *Morus serrator*, two “passerines”, two “Flycatchers”, a parakeet and two nightjars are mounted.

1803/1804

29 December 1803-4 January 1804: A white egret, a Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, four “passerine[s]”, five “shrikes”, a “sunbird”, a munia and a Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* are mounted.

1804

5-11 January: A Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*, 4 “shrikes”, a “flycatcher”, a Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, 2 “finches”, a Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*, a woodpecker and a quail are mounted. 334 birds and 56 mammals from the Baudin expedition have been mounted. In the months that follow many birds are mounted, but none are from the Baudin expedition.



Fig. 3. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus* [MNHN-MO-ZO-2003-3537]: Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 18 February 2015 (© MNHN).

24 March: *Le Géographe* arrives.

28 April: Dufresne mentions that the 422 birds from *Le Géographe* were collected between 22 November 1802 and February 1804 (he first mentions the arrival of *Le Géographe* in the weekly report of 3 April 1803). Combining the birds from *Le Naturaliste* and *Le Géographe* indicates the Baudin expedition returned to France with a total of 1021 birds. Living birds brought back on *Le Géographe* include: King Island Emu *Dromaius ater* (1), Kangaroo Island Emu *Dromaius baudinianus* (1), Egyptian Goose? (from the Cape) *Alopochen aegyptiaca* (2), Marsh Owl? *Asio capensis* (2), Western Crowned-Pigeon *Goura cristata* (2), Purple Gallinule (3), “lory parrot” (1), and Australian King Parrot? *Aprosmictus scapularis* (5) (Jangoux et al 2010).

9-16 May: The first bird from *Le Géographe*, an African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* from South Africa, is mounted.

17 May-23 May: A ring-necked parakeet *Psittacula sp* from South Africa is mounted.

23-30 May: A pigeon and a tern from Mauritius, and a barbet from Bengal are mounted.

31 May-6 June: A small gull, a “shrike” and a kingfisher from Bengal are mounted.

7-12 June: Five emus *Dromaius spp* of different ages, an Ostrich and a Knysna Turaco *Tauraco corythaix* from the Cape are mounted.



Fig. 4. Same bird as in Fig. 3. Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 18 February 2015 (© MNHN).

13-20 June: A shearwater, a ‘Black Cockatoo’, 2 South African birds and a shorebird are mounted between. In June 1804, 325 mounted specimens and 478 additional skins are reported as being present in the MNHN.

21 June-27 June: Dufresne has one woodpecker from Bengal brought back by the Baudin expedition mounted.

28 June-4 July: Two Mascarene Martins *Phedina borbonica* from Mauritius, a ‘Grey’ falcon, 3 ‘shrikes’ and a cuckoo from Bengal are mounted. Between 2 July and 4 July, two penguins (reportedly two species: Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor* and African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*) (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 190 03), Guinea fowl and an avocet are mounted.

5 July-11 July: A ‘Thrush’ from Port Jackson and 4 ‘shrikes’ are mounted.

12-19 July: The 20 birds collected by Dumont at Mauritius are mounted. Two swallows/martins, a raptor, 3 “shrikes” and an unknown bird are also mounted.

18-27 July: A Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* that died in the menagerie is mounted; a Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus* and a rail from Australia are also mounted.

8-15 August: A Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae* from Port Jackson and two albatrosses (one brown, one bluish) are mounted. 50 birds from *Le Géographe* have been mounted so far.

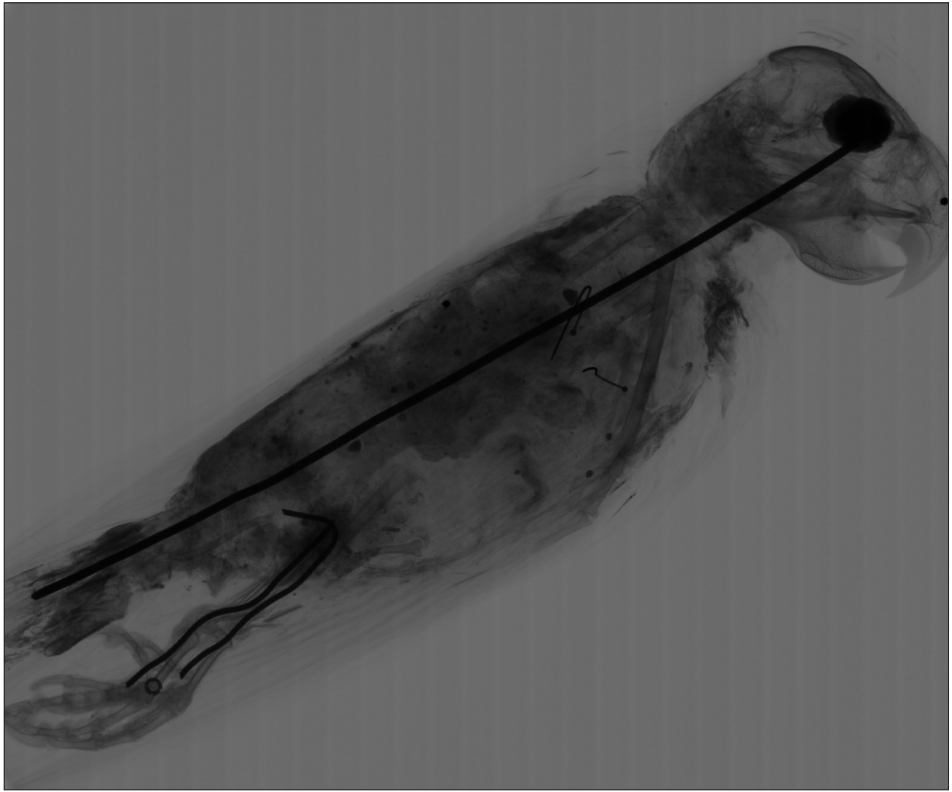


Fig. 5. Same bird as in Fig. 3. Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 8 February 2016 (© MNHN).

16 August-23 August: Two Secretarybirds, a Rainbow Bee-eater, a plover, 3 kingfishers and an unknown bird are mounted.

24-29 August: Two kingfishers are mounted.

30 August-5 September: Dufresne notes that two rollers from Bengale and a bird from the Cape are mounted.

6-12 September: A “shrike” and 3 “flycatchers” was mounted.

23 September: Dufresne reports that 178 bird skins were sent to Empress Josephine, 403 birds had entered the bird galleries, of which 150 were mounted outside the museum (e.g. at the taxidermist homes). By this week, a total of 454 birds from the Baudin expedition have been mounted (so 51 mounted specimens vanished from the museum, as only 403 had entered the museum).

17-24 October: A Superb Lyrebird, a “redstart”, a duck, 2 plovers, 2 terns, a myna and 3 passerines are mounted.

7-14 November: A petrel from Timor, a duck, and a bird from Mauritius are mounted.

15 November-12 November: A Black Bustard *Eupodotis afra* from the Cape is mounted.

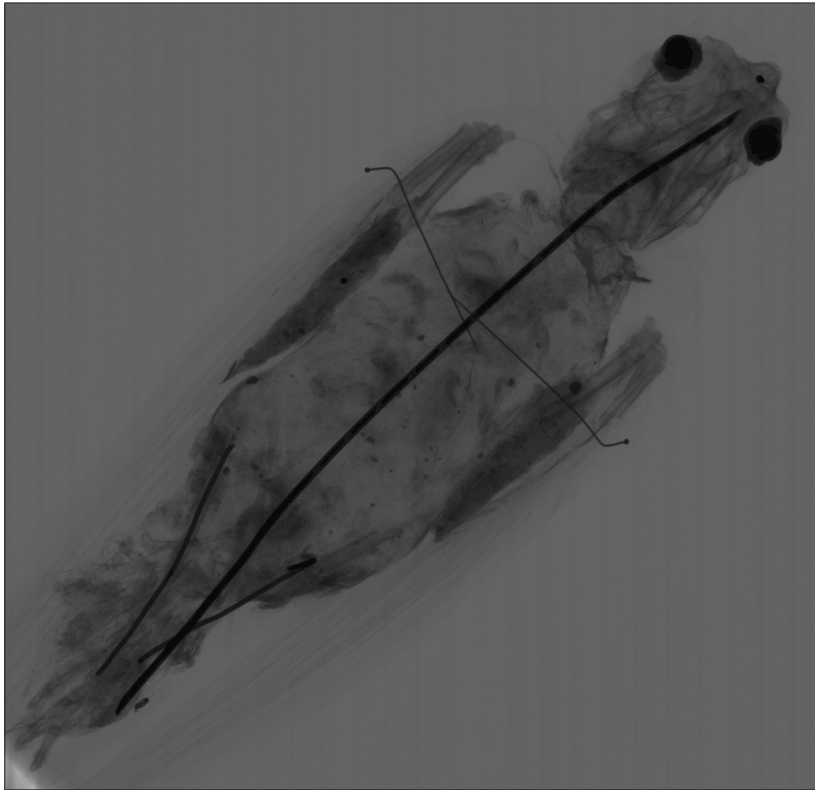


Fig. 6. Same bird as in Fig. 3. Photo: J.J.F.J. Jansen on 8 February 2016 (© MNHN).

13-20 December: A bustard is mounted.

1805

13 February: Dufresne takes 22 Australian birds for his private collection.

27 March: Dufresne takes a beautiful parrot from Tahiti for his private collection.

3-10 April: A moorhen, a kingfisher from the Cape, and a snipe from Bengale are mounted.

12-19 June: Two birds from the expedition are mounted.

2 October: a Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* collected at Mauritius (Muséum d'Histoire naturelle, le Havre, France, 070 10 states that it was collected in South Africa) is mounted.

STYLE

In February 2016, two Baudin expedition original skins (Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna* MNHN-MO-ZO-2003-3649 (Fig. 2) and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus* MNHN-MO-ZO-2003-3537 (Fig. 3-6)) and three Baudin

expedition mounts (now made skin again) (Little Woodswallow *Artamus minor* MNHN-ZO-2013-1012, Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris* MNHN-ZO-2013-1149 and White-winged Triller *Lalage suerii* MNHN-ZO-2012-683 (Fig. 1)) were examined after they were X-rayed.

In the skins, less metal is used than general seen in specimens. Obvious are the broken tibias in the two skins (Fig. 5, 6). In the mounts the metal was removed, and new metal was brought into the specimens. And mounts had a twisted thin wire that is very equally twisted. Equally on the skins are the broken tibias. No arsenic soap was used in both skins as mounts as far as could be established from the X-rays.

RESULTS

According to Louis Dufresne, taxidermist at the MNHN, *Le Naturaliste* brought back the skins of 599 birds (2 August 1803, Archives Nationales AJ/15/590). *Le Géographe* arrived in France with the skins of 422 birds (Dufresne inventory of 28 April 1804, Collections Mammifères et Oiseaux MNHN). In total therefore, the Baudin expedition returned with 1021 bird skins, in addition to at least 34 living birds. It's almost certain however that the expedition collected many more bird skins than it brought back to France, as Laurent (1997) stated that the ships were infested with swarms of cockroaches and rats, and that a number of skins were thrown away after and before making the various documents as noted in this paper.

In 1805 and 1806 birds from Macé were mounted, now explicitly stated as from Macé, while above, for example at 5-11 February 1804 the Forest Wagtail (accessed 9 February 2016) and a woodpecker from Macé were mounted but mentioned as from the Baudin expedition. That is why it is hard to establish when a Macé specimen was part of the totals from the Baudin expedition or when it was part of the load received in the first half of 1801 (358 specimens) (Jansen 2015, 2016). And are the Macé specimens singled out from the Baudin expedition bird in a latter stage? So it remains speculative how many specimens – once included in the 1021 specimens – do still remain. Also overtime some specimens lost their documentation, and therefore hard to trace and not yet been found by author.

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