

# MOST ARISTOCRATIC ANIMAL IN THE WORLD

SKELETON OF TUATARA

BY J. DRUMMOND

## SPHENODON PUNCTATUS

ORDER OF THE RHYNCHOCEPHALIA

On a few lonely islands in the great South Pacific Ocean there lives a New Zealander of most ancient lineage, aristocratic pretensions and conservative instincts. He is a gentleman of high degree, and of such exclusive family relationship that he can recognize only the remotest claims of kinship. His pride of birth is so incomparably great, in fact, that he is never associated in name with the common multitude on any occasion whatever. He is not of the busy, bustling today, but of the old, old, long ago, the past and forgotten yesterday, and he lives in an atmosphere of splendid isolation from all other living creatures. Being one of the creeping things of this earth, scientists throw him into the Reptilian Class, but he has a genius, a family, and even an order that he shares with nobody.

His nearest ally is Homoosaurus, an old buffer who lived in Europe in the Jurassic period. His name is Sphenodon punctatus, and he is of the order Rhynchocephalia, but he is called the Tuatara Lizard for convenience and brevity.

He is not a lizard, at least not wholly so, as turtles, crocodiles, and birds are "near bit connections." His affinities to turtles, indeed, are as strong as his affinities to lizards, and some of his ribs are like the ribs of a bird.

In other words, he is "neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor gude red herring." It is believed that his ancestors existed in the same form as he now possesses, before birds came into the scheme of evolution. Those ancient Tuataras, which were very plentiful, passed their long lives in dreary and desolate scenes that no flowers or fine foliage brightened.

As his ancestors were, so is he. What was good enough for them is good enough for him. Their habits are his habits, and he clings to their views of life closer than a government clings to office.

As he has always been content with such things as he had, he has never joined in the cry of "forward." He has stood stock still through the ages while the world has rushed past him, and he has been dropped behind by country after country until his place of abode is restricted to the colony of New Zealand.

At one time within the past half century the whole of the colony was his domain, but he has been banished to islands on the coast, which are his strong towers against enemies.

He is dying slowly but surely. The world has no time for him now. He has lived too long in the Castle of Indolence. God gets angry with those who do not try to progress, and sooner or later He writes against their names, "Dele." He has stretched forth his hand against this wretched reptile, who has committed the sin of inaction, and must earn the wages of sin, which is death.

My Tuatara, whose portrait is presented here, was hatched, bred, and reared on a speck of land called Stephens Island, in Cooks Strait, which separates the North Island of New Zealand from the South Island. There he spent his babyhood; and when he began to be a big Sphenodon he hunted, grasshoppers, flies, spiders, beetles and similar small game with as much enthusiasm and skill as any other member of the Tuatara community.

When not following the chase, he spent most of his time basking in the glorious sunshine, sprawling in shady pools, drinking huge draughts of cold water, or listening to the fierce winds that howl through the Straits and hurl themselves upon his little island home.

He came to me from over the seas in a wooden box and I have made him a run and a hut to live in. The run is netted over with wire netting to protect him against the dogs and cats, which are his natural enemies. Day and night, when not asleep, or wandering aimlessly around, or taking a bath in his trough, which is always kept filled with water, he lies on the ground with his head slightly elevated and his eyes directed upward.

He eats so little that I am sometimes afraid that he will die of starvation. It is his custom to proclaim a fast, at least once a year. He observes it with a strictness that could not have been surpassed by the fasting prophets of old. I believe that if the subject's condition and other circumstances are taken into consideration there is no record of fasting to be compared with my Tuatara's.

For weeks together he absolutely abstains from food of any kind, but he is never fatter, brighter, healthier and happier than when these fasts are being observed.

I have never heard him utter more than one word. That word he has used on only two or three occasions, when he thought he was going to be hurt. It is "Ugh!" It sounds like an exclamation of disgust, but it is an expression of alarm. It seems to come from the very pit of his stomach and when he utters it he gives rise to a suggestion that he is trying to mix a deep groan with a hollow croak. Otherwise he is as silent as the grave.

The first Tuatara brought under the notice of the public was found on Soames Island, in Wellington harbor, New Zealand, in 1842. Previous to that, however, stories had been told by missionaries and other travelers of a remarkable reptile. The Maoris knew of the Tuatara and had a fairly close acquaintance with it, although they looked upon it as a very uncanny beast and a thing to be carefully avoided. They gave it its popular name.

Dr. Dieffenbach, a naturalist, sent out by the New Zealand Company in the early days of colonization, was told of the existence of a large lizard. He looked for it in places where it had been seen and

offered rewards for specimens. A few days before his departure from the colony, in 1843, he was fortunate enough to obtain a Tuatara that had been caught on a small island off the coast of the north island. He took the specimen with him and it was sent to the British Museum.

Dr. Gray, who classed it as a distinct genus of the family Agamidae, called it Hatteria punctata. Later on it was discovered that the skull of a Tuatara had been received at the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons and that the generic name of Sphenodon had been applied to it. Sphenodon, therefore, it had to be and Sphenodon (wedge-shaped tooth) it has remained.

Dr. Gunther found that it differs in important structural characteristics from every other known saurian, and that, as far as its structure is concerned, it is the most bird-like of all reptiles. Claiming that it ranks higher than a family he placed it in a distinct order of reptiles and he named that order Rhynchocephalia (snout-headed).

Later on the Tuatara became better known to the world. In December, 1851, some officers of the Fifty-eighth Imperial Regiment, which was then stationed in New Zealand, visited Karewa Island, in the Bay of Plenty, and in one hour collected no fewer than forty tuataras of all sizes, up to nearly two feet long.

My Tuatara, I may state here, is exactly 17 inches from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. His head is 3.14 inches, his body is 6.14 inches and his tail 7.12 inches.

At that time Karewa Island was swarming with a small lizard called "Mokomoko" by the Maoris and Lygosoma moco-

three hats an even \$400—he isn't really stingy, but he thinks that even \$50 for a hat is a frightful price. And I'll pay you the difference now, and he'll never hark about it—I must have those three hats.

"So we arranged it that way. She paid me the difference, \$45, and the hats were sent to her. The bill followed a month or so later and her husband's check for the \$50 promptly came back. About three days after receiving her husband's check the woman got out of her carriage and came in to me.

"I am so embarrassed," she said hastily. "I am to do a little shopping and I've left both my pocketbook and my checkbook at home, and I haven't time to drive down to my husband's office. I'd be so obliged if you'd let me have—oh, \$100 say, until tomorrow and I will drop by and let you have it back, or better, I'll send you a check this evening."

"Why, certainly I would. I let her have the \$100 without a thought of any wrong intent on her part. But she didn't 'drop by' the next day nor did she send me any check for the \$100 loan, and it wasn't long before I became reduced to the belief that she had deliberately chiselled me out of that hundred just because it seemed so easy and simple for her to do it. She has bought her millinery elsewhere since then, and I've found out that she has told everybody that I overcharged her frightfully, but that she found out a way to get even with me." The last part of her assertion is perfectly true.

"I have no way to get the hundred from her. Of course, I have absolutely nothing to show for having loaned it to her. I could write a statement of the transaction to her husband if I were foolish enough to do that, but I'm not. He simply send me a bill, a fine letter of

denial, or, worse, come storming down her herself and accuse me of no end of things, and I know better than to do anything of the sort. So I simply pocketed my \$100 loss and let it go at that.

"The woman who do not belong to the 'welfare class' but who are regular customers of the millinery store, are a smaller scale. It is no uncommon thing for a woman of this class who is dissatisfied with her stock of hats to come down here and pick out, say, a pretty evening hat.

"I'll take it if my husband likes it," she says. "Send it up, and I'll show it to him this evening, and if he approves of it, I'll take it."

"Then she wears it to the theater, or to a party, and returns it in the morning, with a note to the effect that her husband doesn't like the hat. How do we know that she has worn the hat? Why, by the hatpin marks in it, bless your simple heart! There are not hatpin jabs in a hat when it is sent out of a milliner's establishment, for the pins are not used in, trying on hats.

"We don't often say anything in a case of this sort. It isn't good policy. But if one woman repeats the trick two or three times then, of course, we have to say something to her about it, and in almost every case she flares up and declares with all the solemnness in the world that she wouldn't think of doing such a thing, and then quits the establishment.

"One night at the opera I saw six of my hats on the heads of women—hats that had been sent to them 'on their husbands' approval,' that is to say, they were all expensive hats, too. Well, every blessed one of those hats came back on the following morning, accompanied by notes to the effect that their husbands didn't like them. To one of those women I had done the trick several times before—I said, the next time she visited the

store, 'But I saw the hat on your head at the opera that night.' She almost went into hysterics she was so angry with me, and of course, I lost her trade. But I didn't mind that. And, by the way, few of the milliners send any hats 'on approval' except to the very cream of their customers during horse show week. They long ago found out what a poor scheme that was.

"Milliners and dressmakers frequently get badly stung, in the saying goes, through the announcement in certain newspapers of purely fictitious marriage engagements. I was one of the victims last year, when certain theatrical and gossip publications more than hinted at an engagement between a 'show girl' and a very well-known New York man of great wealth.

"The announcement had hardly been put forth before this young woman was on her travels in a big motor car hired for the occasion to visit the milliners and mantua-makers. The rich man to whom she was said to be engaged was traveling abroad at the time, and so there was no immediate denial of the story.

"Milliners and dressmakers know what is going on in the circles to which they cater, and I read of this engagement. So, when the young woman appeared as my place and got \$300 and more worth of hats, I was rather pleased. She obtained many thousands of dollars' worth of beautiful things all over New York on the strength of this engagement story before it reached the young man where he was traveling in the Orient. He cabled an instant denial of the story, but that was too late for the people, who let her have the goods. Of course, not a cent could be got from the girl. She simply stated that the engagement had fallen through. It was the first time I had been bitten in just that way. I think I may safely venture to say, 'I will be the last.'"

# FASHIONABLE MILLINERS PROVE EASY MARK FOR THEIR DESIGNING PATRONS

"When I first went into business for myself it astonished me to find how many women there were who considered it smart to beat a milliner, but nothing that women do in the way of business meanness or underhandedness is capable of surprising me any more," said a woman milliner.

"Look at this, for example," and she exhibited a check for \$45, filled out in a feminine hand, folding the name under, so that it could not be read. "This check represents as deliberately mean a transaction as could be imagined, and yet it is a dodge that has been worked upon me four or five times by different women since I started in business.

"The woman whose name is on this check is the wife of a prosperous man, and she lives in a beautiful house. It is well known to tradespeople that her husband lets her have all the money that any woman, even one with extravagant tastes, could possibly need.

"And yet she is not above turning so contemptible a trick as this. She came here for the first time yesterday. I recognized her at once, was pleased to think that I was going to have her for a customer, and would have given her any amount of credit she asked for. But she didn't ask me for any credit. She picked out two hats that she liked, each of them costing \$45.

"Send them to my house this evening," she said to me, "and I will return you a check."

"Well, that looked even better—she was going to be a fine new cash customer, it

seemed. "I sent the two hats to her, together with a receipted bill for the full amount, \$90. She gave my delivery man this check for \$45. She handed the man this check in a sealed envelope, took the hats and the receipted bill for \$90, and there you are. I had had this thing, as I say, worked upon me before, but I could not think it possible that this woman would do it. I thought she must have made some mistake. So I went up to see her this forenoon. I explained the situation to her, but she simply would not listen to me—in fact, boldly told me that I was trying to cheat her, and all but showed me the door. That ends the transaction. I am \$45 out.

"There is no way to guard against such meanness as that. When the dodge was first worked upon me, about two years ago, I was so angry that I instructed my delivery man not to accept any more money or checks placed in sealed envelopes, but to open the envelope and examine the contents before giving up the receipted bill. He did this in a couple of cases where regular women customers gave him checks in sealed envelopes, and found everything all right. The women became very angry over what they called his impertinence and withdrew their patronage from me, so I had to instruct him not to open the envelopes any more.

"This woman whose check I have in my hand gets two hats for the price of one, and of course she will not come back to my place any more. She will no doubt work the same game upon other milliners

and different sorts of business houses that deal in women's wear, and I cannot believe, from the way she treated me this morning, that she will suffer the least compunction of conscience over her catty meanness.

"Her dodge, of course, is merely another version of the old money in the envelope dodge that professional swindlers used to employ before it became too stale. I would not, of course, permit my delivery man to accept payment in that way from a strange woman, one who received the goods sent to her at a hotel, for instance. That old scheme was worked time and again years ago, as everybody knows. But this woman presumed upon her credit, and upon my knowing that she was what we call 'good,' to cheat me out of just half the amount of my bill.

"I couldn't begin to name half of the downright dishonest things that some women will do in their efforts to get the best of milliners. Not long ago a woman who had been a customer of mine for some time came to me in a state of great apparent distress. I had a bill of \$120 against her.

"My husband is very angry over that bill," she told me. "He declares that I am borrowing money and having my tradespeople put the borrowed money on their bills for goods, and he is perfectly unreasonable. Now, here is what I wish you'd do for me. Cut your bill down to \$75 and I will pay you \$50 now and the rest later, and you give me the bill receipted in full so that I can show it to him and tell him how good you had been to me in chopping down the bill. Then I can get some more hats."

"I told her that I couldn't cut the bill down at all—that it was a just bill, and so on.

"Well," she said then, "I will pay you the \$50 now and then won't you let me have the bill receipted in full just to show him? And I'll send you the remainder of the amount in a couple of weeks." "I didn't like the sound of this, either, naturally enough, since I've been fooled so often by these dodges.

"No," said I; "I will do this: You pay me the \$50 now and I shall let you have the bill receipted in full if you will let me have your personal note for the remaining \$70."

"She agreed, and I took her \$50 and handed her the bill for \$120 receipted in full. Then I sat down to make out the personal note for the remaining \$70 for her to sign, when she calmly turned and walked out of the place. She was stepping into her automobile before I had a chance to realize what was happening. There would have been no use in my flying out after her, especially when the store was full of people, and so I simply let her go, with a piece of paper showing that she had paid me a full \$120 when she had really only given me \$50 on account. That's another one that, I think, it would be pretty hard to match for meanness.

"Last fall a woman whom I knew to be perfectly good, so far as what we call the blue book is concerned, came to my place for the first time and selected three very expensive hats. One of them cost \$130, the second \$55 and the third \$80.

"She gave a gasp when I told her the aggregate cost of the three hats she had picked out.

"Oh, I know that my husband would never agree to that bill in the wide world," she said.

"But do you need all three of the hats at the same time?" I asked her. "Perhaps if you took them separately, at short intervals, and he received the three separate bills he would—"

"No," she interrupted, "we'll do it this way: Make out the total bill for the