

First Record of *Palaelodus* (Aves: Phoenicopteriformes) from New Zealand

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ABSTRACT. The first record of the flamingo-like Palaelodidae (Phoenicopteriformes) is reported from the Early Miocene, St Bathans Fauna of Central Otago, New Zealand. Two distal tibiotarsi are described as a new *Palaelodus* species and a cranial fragment of a sternum is tentatively assigned to the same taxon. The new species is slightly smaller than *P. wilsoni* from the Late Oligocene–Early Miocene of Australia, and is distinguished from all congeners by a more robust shaft with a gradual expansion of width to the distal condyles.

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“... it is the ‘first’ that fixes the peg upon which he can hang all the subsequent and, we hope, oft-repeated contacts that eventually grow into a real understanding. The “first” has to come first in avian paleontology likewise and, sad to relate, that first may be restricted to a single bone or a mere fragment thereof.” (Loye Miller, 1950: 69).

Palaelodidae is an extinct family of long-legged aquatic birds presently considered to be the sister taxon of flamingos (Phoenicopteridae; Cheneval, 1983a; Heizmann & Hesse, 1995; Mlíkovský, 2002; Mayr, 2005). Known from Europe, Egypt, North and South America and Australia, they were first recognized when Milne-Edwards (1863) described

Palaelodus ambiguus, *P. crassipes* and *P. gracilipes* from St Gérard-le-Puy, of Aquitanian, European Mammal Neogene Reference Level MN 2a, or Early Miocene, age (Cheneval, 1983a). Later, Milne-Edwards (1867–1871) described two further species, *P. minutus* and *P. goliath*. Lambrecht (1933) synonymized *P. minutus* with *P. gracilipes*, a move not followed by Brodkorb (1963) or Švec (1981). However, Cheneval (1983a) accepted this synonymy when he revised the palaelodids from St Gérard-le-Puy, listing three species of *Palaelodus* in the Aquitanian deposits (*Palaelodus ambiguus*, *P. crassipes*, *P. gracilipes*) and transferring *Palaelodus goliath* to *Megapalaelodus* A.H. Miller, 1944.

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