

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
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Chatham Island fernbird: pp 212-213.

(E) Chatham Island Fernbird *Megalurus rufescens* (Buller 1869), Endemic
1868 Mangere Island, Chatham Islands

Charles Traill discovered this species on Mangere Island. With what must have been a remarkable throw, he knocked over a specimen with a stone. It had been “flitting about among the grass and stunted vegetation”. The specimen was forwarded to Buller (1869), who described it. It has been suggested it may be more closely related to the Fijian Long-legged Thicketbird *Megalurulus rufus* than the mainland Fernbird. Oliver attributed its extinction within 25 years of discovery to burning, cats and collectors. A distinct species, it also had “a peculiar whistle”, in addition to the usual fernbird “u-tick”.

“I only found this bird on Mangare, where it is not uncommon. Its peculiar habit of hopping rapidly from one point of concealment to another renders it difficult to secure. It has a peculiar whistle, very like that which a man would use in order to attract the attention of another at some distance, and although I knew that I was alone on the island, I frequently stopped mechanically on hearing the note of this bird, under the momentary impression that some other person was whistling to me. It also uses the same cry as *Sphenæacus punctatus*. It is solitary in its habits and appears to live exclusively on insects” Travers (1872).