

The maverick and the bureaucrat: the tension between Nicholas Pike and Edward Newton in documenting Mauritian natural history in the 1860s & 1870s

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Introduction

Either side of 1870 in Mauritius, there were two stand-out expatriate naturalists, both very active in collecting and writing, and both very much involved with the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius. One was American consul Nicolas Pike¹, whose birth bicentenary is being celebrated today²; the other was Edward Newton, the Colonial Secretary, i.e. the Governor's deputy, and the man effectively in charge of the day to day running of the then British colony. They could hardly have been more different in character, and it is perhaps not surprising that they were not, to put it mildly, the best of friends. Pike was in the island 1867-1873, Newton 1859-1877.

The *dramatis personae*

Although we don't have many descriptions of him from others (apart from Newton, of which more later), it is clear from his own writings, especially *Sub-tropical rambles* (Pike 1873), that he was sociable, ebullient, loquacious and possessed of a large ego³, evidently good company and entertaining. In his account of visiting the Seychelles in 1871 (Pike 1872) he proudly reveals when visiting the masonic lodge in Victoria that he "was very handsomely received by the Officers and Members of the Lodge, with the honors due me as S. P. R. S. of the G. O. F." – that is to say 'Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret' of the Grand Orient de France – that's the second highest of their 33 masonic degrees (Hannah 1952) – i.e. a very big fish in that small pond. He had a very high opinion of his own natural history knowledge, was often called upon to pontificate on objects exhibited at meetings of the *Société Royale*. Eighteen months after his arrival, he was elected a member in July 1868 'in recognition of his important position, the varied knowledge he possesses, and the services he has rendered to science' (Séance du 23 juillet 1868, *TRSAS*⁴ NS 3(2): 108, 1869; my translation⁵), and then to the Council the following January (Séance annuelle du 26 janvier 1869, *TRSAS* NS 3(2)135), topping the votes. In his undated farewell letter (Séance du 23 août 1873, *TRSAS* NS 8: 22-24, 1875⁶) Pike thanks the Society for electing him a Vice-President, though I cannot find evidence of when this was done. As I noted in *Lost land of the Dodo* (Cheke & Hume 2008), Pike "spent so much time exploring the island, both socially and physically, that his official duties must have been rather light". However, like Newton, he appears to have associated mainly with the British, in his case planters and especially, perhaps as an ex-soldier, the military. He had married in 1846, having four children, but his wife died in 1866 (Dittberner 2014). Although there is no evidence of any romantic attachment in his Mauritian *oeuvre*, the *TRSAS* or even in Newton's letters, Pike was quietly getting his fish collection painted by an Englishwoman, Maria Hadley, whom he married in 1874 on his return to America (Dittberner 2014) – dark horse!

Newton, 14 years younger than Pike, was by contrast somewhat of a loner and, meticulous and conscientious, almost a workaholic – in short the ideal bureaucrat. While personally affable, he was not given to much socialising, preferring a small circle of friends with whom to go birding, shooting small game etc. – James Caldwell, Malcy Moon (=de Chazal, talented botanical artist & Caldwell's girlfriend), William Kerr, S. Roch and James Currie feature most often in his letters. He was clearly seen in London as a 'safe pair of hands' in Mauritius, promoted from Assistant Colonial Secretary to Auditor-General in 1863 (Tristram 1897), then to the full post of colonial Secretary in 1869 (*MA*⁷ 1870: 287), and retaining that position until promoted to Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica in 1877 (Tristram 1897). He married late in life (at 37), in 1869, but lost both wife and shortly afterwards his young son to malaria in 1870 soon after the malady first struck Mauritius. Although initially devastated by his wife's death, he had 4 months later recovered his stiff upper lip to the extent that he barely recorded the second tragedy in his letters home to his brother Alfred, professor

¹ He spelt his name without an 'h', but in the British edition of his book it is spelt 'Nicholas' on the title page.

² i.e. at the symposium held on 13th October 2018 at the Mauritius Commercial Bank HQ, Saint-Jean, Mauritius

³ I made this list of characteristics before finding the following in Dittberner's biography (2014): "he was an enormously curious, energetic, articulate and competent individual, probably gregarious, and a social celebrity and star in mid-19th century Brooklyn, at least among natural scientists..."

⁴ *TRSAS* stands for the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Arts & Sciences of Mauritius*

⁵ See Dittberner (2014) for a list of these activities and achievements, which were far from negligible.

⁶ The original manuscript of this letter was reproduced by Dittberner (2014); at the meeting where the letter was read out, Pike was described in the *procès-verbal* as 'one of the Society's most active and intelligent members' (my translation). Pike is listed as an Honorary Member in the membership list published in *TRSAS* NS 8: 166-168, 1875, though when he was so elected is not clear.

⁷ *MA* is the *Mauritius Almanac*, a government gazette published annually (title sometimes varied).



Fig.1. (left) Nicholas Pike, from the frontispiece of *Subtropical rambles* (Pike 1873).

Fig.2. (above) Sir Edward Newton, from RSAS Centenary volume 1932.

of zoology at Cambridge University: ‘This is but a sad letter to write – I have lost my poor little boy’ – he never mentioned the baby’s name! (Newton 1851-82). In general he comes over in his frequent letters home as a chronic mild depressive, and Governor Arthur Gordon (1894) remarked in 1871 in a letter that “Newton is awfully slovenly; his collar and cuffs are *Vandyked*⁸ by bad washing, and his shirt front has no buttons”, though admittedly he suffered “from frequent attacks of fever, but is, on the whole, in better preservation than his colleagues. He has, however, within the last year, lost both his wife and only child” (Cheke & Hume 2008: 322, note 94). Although happy to occasionally indulge in the elite Mauritian sport of *la chasse*⁹, Newton was an English chauvinist: “Newton is a gentleman, cultivated and agreeable; he is an authority on natural history, but not, I should say on political science. His ‘policy’ is the narrow old one of ‘stamping out’ the French language, French laws, French manners, French religion, thereby making everything English as unpopular as in Wales or Ireland. My policy is just the reverse...” (Gordon 1894); it is clear from other passages in Gordon’s book that Newton, while remaining civil and overtly compliant, opposed Gordon’s initiatives in a passive-aggressive manner – but then as his wife Rachael admitted (Gordon 1894) “They say here of Arthur that ‘he doesn’t *govern*, he *rules*’, so some push-back might have been expected from Newton who in Gordon’s words “has been accustomed to think of himself as a Prime minister, supreme over the administration, and only referring to the Governor in doubtful cases or for a merely formal approval”. He appears to have kept his relations with the Franco-Mauritian elite on a strictly business level, apart from the naturalists of the *Société Royale*, which he joined within months of his arrival on the island¹⁰ – he was present at the séance of 23 January 1860 (*TRSAS NS* 2(1): 147, 1860), elected to the Council in December 1860 (*ibid.* p.158), and the Presidency in January 1869 (Séance annuelle du 26 janvier 1869, *TRSAS NS* 3(2)135), a position he held on and off for the next 8 years. Unlike several of his

⁸ Given jagged edges

⁹ driven deer hunting

¹⁰ There is no complete published record of the meetings of the Royal Society in 1859. Some material appeared in the *Commercial Gazette* (see Staub & Herbereau 2013), but there is no mention of Newton’s admission to the society.

associates¹¹, there is no evidence that Newton was a freemason, and was thus outside one of the then important local social networks.

What was said, what was left out

Having assassinated both their characters, what about their relationship? Firstly their breadth of interests were rather different. Pike, as any reader of *Sub-tropical rambles* will know, dabbled in all aspects of natural history, but his primary love was fish and seaweeds, which he collected and catalogued assiduously (e.g. Gudger 1929 & TRSAS *passim*, 1868-73), and ferns. Arthur Gordon, who clearly had nothing against Pike, and had invited him to join him on a trip to the Seychelles in 1871¹², nonetheless summed him up succinctly, contrasting him with the botanist who was in charge of the Pamplemousses Gardens¹³: “We take with us Pike and Horne for scientific purposes. Col. Pike’s science is very superficial, but he has a large smattering of knowledge on many subjects, Horne’s science is real, but limited strictly to botany” (Gordon 1894).

Newton’s interest was almost exclusively in birds and their eggs, which he documented with a thoroughness unusual at the time, sending specimens home to his brother in Cambridge. He was very much involved in helping George Clark over the discovery and transmission to UK of dodo bones in 1865-6 (Hume *et al.* 2009) and later worked on Rodrigues subfossils (Günther & Newton 1879); he also occasionally took a passing interest in other animals (Newton 1861-82).

We don’t have, in print, any assessment of Newton by Pike, only passing references in his published writings to Newton’s publications or views on a specific bird, as in his account of the Seychelles (Pike 1872). He did however deliberately, possibly pointedly, eschew dodos for the equally extinct and flightless red hen *Aphanapteryx* in the title and preface of his book, and though he rambled right past the Mare aux Songes, on foot and by train, he avoided discussing it¹⁴. Pike spent several days in Mahébourg, consorting with the soldiers of the garrison, but neither mentioned nor visited the by then famous discoverer of dodo bones, local schoolmaster George Clark, the very man who inspired the title of his book¹⁵. There is not a single mention of Newton in *Sub-tropical rambles*, despite other officials and local luminaries featuring throughout. Newton’s letters reveal that he was one of the party on Pike’s second visit to Round Island, accompanied and promoted by his ‘good friend’¹⁶ the Governor Sir Henry Barkly in 1869 (Cheke & Hume 2008: 213), but Pike somehow forgot to mention this in his account (Pike 1873). When we see what Newton thought of Pike, one has to presume the feeling was mutual, though, presumably for political reasons, he praised ‘our Honoured President’ in his farewell letter read to the Society on 27 August 1873 (TRSAS NS 8: 23-24; Dittberner 2014) and thanked him “not alone for the friendly relations between us [!] but for his valuable assistance in my work on Mauritius”.

In print Newton never references Pike at all, though as they wrote on different subjects this is not entirely unexpected. In his letters to his brother (Newton 1861-82¹⁷), however it is a different matter. Perhaps because the intervening letters are missing¹⁸, he is not mentioned at all until 6 May 1869 following Pike’s reading of a paper on his

¹¹ In its listings of officers and officials of all sorts, some issues of *MA* (e.g. 1864, 1865) listed officers of masonic lodges in Mauritius, including several individuals involved with Newton’s ornithological activities, notably F.W.H. Barlow and C.E. Bewsher. Later issues had no such information.

¹² Pike (1872; Cheke & Hume 2008: 323, note 107) says, in his usual florid way, “I had long desired to see this interesting group of islands, and fortune at length favoured my wishes in the shape of an invitation to visit the various Dependencies of Mauritius in HBM Frigate *Forté*” – he did not specify who invited him, but it must have been the Governor.

¹³ The Royal Botanic Gardens, Pamplemousses, since 1988 the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden (Owadally 1976).

¹⁴ He did however acquire some dodo bones, presented to the American Museum of Natural History, New York: “in 1870 J Carson Brevoort, of this city, presented to the Museum a number of the bones which he had received from Col. Nicholas Pike, the United States Consul at that time at Mauritius” (Parish 2015, quoting the *New York Evening Post* of 18.10.1915).

¹⁵ Pike clearly borrowed his title from Clark’s *A Ramble round Mauritius by a country schoolmaster* (1859). Pike did not date his visit to Mahébourg, so it may have been while Clark was absent, ill, in England during 1869-71 (Hume *et al.* 2009).

¹⁶ That the Governor was considered a ‘good friend’ comes from a lecture in 1889 cited by Dittberner (2014); Pike simply refers to him as ‘my friend’ in a letter to Joseph Hooker dated 18 September 1869 (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Archives, Director’s Correspondence, item KADC3047 - online on JStor). Barkly was Gordon’s predecessor as Governor.

¹⁷ All of Newton’s letters mentioned in this paper are to his brother Alfred, professor of Zoology at Cambridge University 1866-1907 (Anon. 1992: 2174).

¹⁸ Newton’s letter books (copies of outgoing letters) from 4 March 1866 – 10 March 1869 are missing from the Newton Papers in the Cambridge University Library; they were in a despatch box stolen from Newton on a train in Mauritius on 10 March 1869 (letter 10.3.1869).

first visit to Round Island in December 1868 (Séance du 22 Avril 1869; Pike 1870a, revised in Pike 1873), Newton wrote

“The last meeting [of the RSAS] I was at we had a most absurd paper by the American Consul here on ‘Round Island’. I could hardly keep any gravity when he read it – he is *supposed* to be a great naturalist, but is a most awful liar & humbug you ever came across”.

On 1 October the same year he commented that

“Col. Pike the U.S. Consul here is about preparing an elaborate work on this island & is devoting a chapter to the birds. He of course {sent} a most dreadful {number}, but I have tried to help him {.....}¹⁹ as to names. Sir H.B[arkly] is doing the same with his list of ferns. As American Gov^t publish any thing I suppose they will this, & I am anxious that the first list of Mauritian birds should be as correct as possible”.

Apart from some neutral references, for instance a summary account of Pike’s cyclone-lashed enforced stay on Round Island in 1869, he goes quiet until 1871 when Pike goes off with Gordon to the Seychelles:

We have got back General Smyth as our temporary chief, the Governor having gone down to Seychelles with the Admiral who arrived here about a fortnight ago ... Col. Pike too has gone down, but I do not expect they will bring back anything in my line [i.e. birds] worth having. I have posted them up and given Pike written instructions²⁰ as to what he is to do, but he is such a humbug (letter 23.8.1871).

Well, the Governor came back from Seychelles last month, but had done nothing in my way. Colonel Pike got one *Tchitrea corvina* [Seychelles paradise flycatcher], one *Zosterops modesta* [Seychelles grey white-eye] and a *Tinnunculus gracilis* [Seychelles kestrel] but nothing else (letter 19/10/1871).

In fact Pike shot, and thus presumably preserved, a whole lot more birds – *colibris* (sunbirds), merles *Hypsipetes* bulbuls), *paille-en-queues* (tropic birds) and white (=fairy) terns²¹, as well as collecting a whole gamut of other fauna (Pike 1872²²).

In 1872, a word of praise ! – “We [the RSAS] had our exhibition last week, a very poor affair generally, but the natural history section was certainly the best we have ever had. Col. Pike showed a very fine collection of sea weeds from our coasts, many of which were new & nearly all rare ...” (letter 23/8/1872; Pike regularly exhibited – see e.g. TRSAS NS 5), but the following year Newton had a couple of sharp stings in Pike’s tail to add.

At the *séance* of 20 March 1873 Pike announced that his book *Sub-tropical rambles* had just been published in London (TRSAS NS 7:113, 1874). It took a while to reach Mauritius, but on 20 August 1873 Newton wrote:

Colonel Pike’s book came out by the last mail – it is a most awful book as I expected it would be & full of gross lies and excess {print}. The only original points are the account of his own {sociessions} [?associations], all the rest is a compilation from different books. The second volume is to be on Natural History, & part of this may be valuable, though it may be difficult to divide the truth from the fiction. He is going to leave us, he says, for a promotion, but the only American merchant here says he has been recalled for malpractice in regard to the condemnation of ships &c., and I should not be surprised if this history is correct as I believe he is an old scamp.

Particularly interesting of course is the last sentence, suggesting that Pike was recalled for perceived misdeeds in his official work – and so it has proved. An inadequate response to a renegade American whaling captain’s fraudulent activities and cruelty to crew in 1871-72 appears to have been the trigger for his recall (Michel Perrier’s presentation at the symposium, Busch 1994); Pike himself refers obliquely to his problems in a letter to Joseph Hooker Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in the UK dated 18 May 1872: “I am sorry to say that for some months my time has been so occupied with official business I have scarcely had a day to devote hunting for fresh specimens”.

In his farewell letter to the Society, mentioned above, read on 27 August 1873, he said that he was about to leave “on a short visit to my native land to see my family” (TRSAS NS 8: 23-24), suggesting he expected to be posted elsewhere – however the ‘short visit’ appears to have lasted the rest of his life (Dittberner 2014). Later, in a letter dated 9 October 1873 to Joseph Hooker, Pike told yet a different story:

¹⁹ Newton’s handwriting is abominable, and some words are illegible; illegible and uncertain words are in curly brackets.

²⁰ ‘instructions as to what he is to do’ is a pretty bossy attitude, which I doubt if Pike would have appreciated!

²¹ Seychelles Sunbird *Nectarinia dussumieri*, Seychelles Merle *Hypsipetes crassirostris*, White-tailed Tropic-bird *Phaethon lepturus*, Fairy Tern *Gygis alba*.

²² summarised in a letter to Joseph Hooker: “I went in for zoology & marine botany and was very successful especially in snakes, lizards, arachnids, birds & their eggs & snail shells both land and marine” (RBG Kew Archives: KADC3052).

My health has been precarious for many months this year. I have been unable to continue my researches for algae & I am now on the point of leaving for the United States and do not intend returning to Mauritius²³.

Finally, on 15 October 1873 we have a last barb:

Colonel Pike is due to leave in a day or so for the U.States. He gave me his chapter on the birds of Mauritius which is to come out in the second volume²⁴ – it will have been quite impossible to correct all his mistakes – the whole thing would require to be rewritten, but I think I have prevented him making more than ordinary blunders, but whether he adopts my corrections is another thing”.

Rival egos – were Newton’s strictures justified ?

Was this bile just personal dislike, or was there a reasonable basis for Newton’s opinions ? I think that it may have started with bruised ego. When Pike, already with a certain reputation as a naturalist, burst onto the island, Newton had already been there seven years, and was an established expert on the birds of the island and well ensconced on the council of the Royal Society. Pike arrived on 12 January 1867 (Pike 1873²⁵), and coincidentally Newton left on home leave, via the Seychelles, on the 18th (Newton 1867), not returning for over a year. Still in UK in February 1868 (Newton 1858-95), he is back in Mauritius by 30 April (Séance du 30 avril 1868, TRSAS NS 3: 109, 1869). In the meantime Pike had impressed members of the society, becoming, for instance, one of the first, in March, to land on Ilot Barkly, freshly emerged in Port Louis harbour after storms in January 1868. Newton now had a more charismatic rival. Gordon reveals how Newton, a few years later, was jealous of his position in the island hierarchy:

The Colonial Secretary is a gentleman, and fairly loyal in carrying out orders he don’t [*sic*] like, but he is tacitly and obstructively an opponent, for he disapproves of me, both as regards my political views and in my estimate of his personal position. He has been accustomed to think of himself as a Prime minister, supreme over the administration, and only referring to the Governor in doubtful cases or for a merely formal approval. This does not suit me ...

As a tranche of letters are missing, we don’t know if Newton commented to his brother about Pike before the report on his first Round Island visit, but there was at least one observation in that report (Pike 1870) that upset him – he added a marginal note in his copy of the *Transactions*²⁶ against Pike’s account of seeing petrels sitting on eggs that “the birds breed in holes of the rocks quite out of sight; he could not *see* them sitting”; Newton considered he knew all about Round Island, having been there himself in November 1860 (Newton 1861). In retrospect that was an unfair assessment, as Pike had probably encountered the surface-nesting ‘Round Island’ Petrels *Pterodroma arminjoniana* and not the burrowing Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* that Newton assumed – Newton himself indirectly reporting the former on their 1869 visit (Newton 1861-82, Cheke & Hume 2008).

Pike’s (1871a) article on his first visit to Round Island is indeed full of inaccuracies – the discussion of the lizards has the names all wrong²⁷, and the geology is way off, but unless Newton knew a lot more about lizards and geology than he lets on his letters, why would he find that excruciating ?

Newton commented unfavourably on Pike’s knowledge of birds twice in his letters. Without sight of Pike’s drafts this disparagement is difficult to assess. Apart from the cross-purposes on petrels, there is nothing much in Pike’s mentions of birds in *Sub-tropical rambles* that indicates errors or false observations, though Mynas are misprinted as ‘Nyna birds’ on p.286 and cave swiftlets’ nests are referred to as ‘edible swallow’s-nests’ on p.287, albeit with the correct scientific name. Since both the swallow *Phedina borbonica* and the swift *Collocalia francica* are called *hirondelle* by French-speaking Mauritians, this is hardly a grave mistake in a popular book. In the Seychelles (Pike 1872) he had the male and female *veuves* (‘widows’ = paradise flycatchers ‘*Tchitrea corvina*’) the wrong way round, which suggests he didn’t check the gonads when skinning them, and took the black sex to be female from the name. But

²³ RBG Kew: Archives KADC3054 (online on JStor).

²⁴ This promised second volume, already ‘nearly completed’ in November 1872 according to Pike’s preface in *Sub-tropical rambles* (p.vi), never appeared. In October 1873 he was still confident “My second vol. continues on the Fauna and Flora of Mauritius will I hope be ready for press early in the spring [of 1874]” (letter to J.Hooker 9.10.1873, already cited). ‘Nearly completed’ and ‘ready for press’ were clearly more fancy than fact, as in 1877 he wrote to Louis Bouton explaining that the second book was delayed by difficulty in curating and identifying all his collections of insects and crustaceans, though they were ‘in good hands’ (letter dated 23.9.1877 in RSAS archives, displayed in the Pike Exhibition at the Blue Penny Museum, Port Louis, October 2018). Oddly, neither this letter, nor the list of Mauritian fish which accompanied it, were referred to in the TRSAS of the period. The manuscript of the second volume, if it ever existed, has never surfaced despite searches (Gudger 1929, Dittberner 2014).

²⁵ Not in ‘April 1867’ as claimed by Dittberner (2014).

²⁶ Newton’s set is in the Radcliffe Science Library in Oxford, having been acquired by former Mauritian Government meteorologist and MA editor Albert Walter, who gave them to the library in 1960 (Cheke & Hume 2008).

²⁷ Barkly (1871), discussing the second visit, doesn’t do much better on lizards, but the companion paper by Pike (1871b) this time gets them right.

it is his compiled bird lists that clearly irritated Newton; the second attempt, subsequent to the publication of *Sub-tropical rambles*, still clearly a problem two years after he appears to have corrected an earlier version. In the interval Pike had promised his bird list for publication in the *Transactions* (séance du 21 Octobre 1871, *TRSAS NS* 6:4, 187²⁸), but he didn't deliver - it never appeared, and there is no copy in the Society's archives (pers. obs. 2008). Although assiduous in documenting his fish, Pike may have been less meticulous when it came to birds, and certainly when making miscellaneous off-the-cuff identifications at Society meetings, he was often wrong, the more experienced Louis Bouton providing the true answer (*TRSAS NS* vols. 3-7, *passim*).

It should be noted that Newton himself was just as remiss in publishing on Mauritian birds. In his speech at the *Séance annuelle* of 10 October 1874, he said that "For my own part, I may say that I have long been collecting notes on the Avifauna of the Mascarene Islands, and it is my intention, on my next visit to Europe, to work them up into a proper shape" (Newton 1875). He never did²⁹.

Final word – not really a conclusion

'A most awful liar & humbug', and *Sub-tropical rambles* being 'awful' and 'full of gross lies', are pretty grave slanders whatever scientific peccadilloes Pike may have made bird-wise, so must have a deeper origin. No doubt Pike's flowery literary style won't have been to Newton's more sober scientific taste, but again that's not enough to explain the bald accusation of lying, which Newton did not substantiate. I suspect that there must have been an incident relatively early in Pike's time in Mauritius that established him in Newton's mind as a thoroughly dodgy character; an incident possibly known only to him³⁰, as there's no evidence that other members of the *Société Royale*, at least, held any animosity towards him. Indeed they passed a motion at the meeting of 19 November 1873 praising his work and regretting his departure from Mauritius (*TRSAS NS* 8: 46-47); Newton was not present that day. Pike has to this day retained a place in the *Société's* heart, being belatedly inscribed on the Obélisque Liénard in Pamplemousses Gardens in 1997 (Séance du 9 juillet 1997, *PRSAS* 7: 125, 2004³¹), an honour not extended to Newton, whose contributions to the knowledge of Mauritian fauna, extant and extinct, if perhaps less visible, match or exceed Pike's³².

In the absence of any further evidence further speculation is futile, but perhaps in some old correspondence surviving amongst Mauritian archives or families, there may be clue to this clash of key personalities in 19th century Mauritian natural history.

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- NB: In the text and in the list below *PRSAS* or *TRSAS* refers to the *Proceedings* or *Transactions of the Royal Society of Arts & Sciences of Mauritius*, and *MA* to the *Mauritius Almanac & Commercial Gazette/Register*.
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²⁸ "Col. Pike has willingly consented to put at the society's disposal his work 'Natural history of birds of Mauritius' to be published in the next *Transactions* of the society".

²⁹ He did eventually publish a summary table of birds in Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues & the Seychelles in the context of a talk about extinctions (Newton 1888), but it was nowhere near the comprehensive descriptive work he could have produced from his ample data.

³⁰ As Colonial Secretary he may have had access to privileged information not in the public domain, which he would not have been able to share with the RSAS or even his brother.

³¹ *PRSAS* = *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Arts & Sciences*, successor to the *Transactions*.

³² His collection of Mauritian birds and their eggs, in Cambridge University's zoology museum, remains the largest in any museum (Cheke & Jones 1987, Table 3). In Mauritius he promoted the first bird protection legislation for land-birds (other than game-birds) anywhere in the world, though it was not enacted until after he left (Cheke & Hume 2008). Although his writings on Mauritius, albeit valuable, are sparse, he made and published important discoveries in the (then) dependencies – Rodrigues and Seychelles, and actively promoted searching for subfossil bones in both Mauritius and Rodrigues (Hume *et al.* 2009, Günther & Newton 1879, Newton & Günther 1893).

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