

OBSERVATIONS ON SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SEA BIRDS—II

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The second visit of the C.S.I.R. fisheries investigation vessel, the M.V. *Warreen*, to South Australian waters took place between December 3 and 13, 1939, and was of shorter duration than the first cruise in February-March earlier in the year. Moreover a more restricted itinerary was observed and no specimens were collected.

The course followed was north-west across Lacepede Bay, Backstairs Passage, Port Adelaide, Sandy Point (Yorke Peninsula), Althorpe Island, Wedge Island, Port Lincoln, Coffin's Bay, Neptune Islands, Cape Borda, Emu Bay, Kingscote, and Antechamber Bay.

The following notes were made:

Fluttering Shearwater (*Puffinus gavia*).—The only occasion on which this bird was seen was on December 9, in Coffin's Bay. A single bird was swimming just inside the bay and flew off as the ship approached. A few minutes later a party of 25 was similarly disturbed. The birds had the same fluttering flight as their smaller New South Wales relatives. We did not visit the south-eastern end of Kangaroo Island where they were found to be so plentiful during the previous cruise.

Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*).—Large concentrations of mutton-birds were not seen and the small companies that were, were frequently too far off to be identified with certainty. Flocks of about 40 or so, either of this species or of *P. carneipes*, were noticed when rounding the tip of Eyre Peninsula and off the Neptunes. The comparatively low population of mutton-birds encountered was in marked contrast to the vast numbers seen by me on the east coast of Tasmania a few weeks previously.

Fleshy-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*).—One bird was identified (by its pale beak) about 20 to 25 miles west of Rivoli Bay on December 3, and another off Seacliff. Though this species was first recorded from South Australian waters only as late as 1917 (Captain S. A. White), it appears to be a regular and, I believe, quite an abundant summer visitor, but no breeding grounds are known east of the Archipelago of the Recherche in Western Australia. The Rivoli Bay record is probably the furthest east of this sub-species so far published; but it is quite likely that it reaches western Victorian waters occasionally: It is of interest to mention

that on this cruise I saw a bird of the western Tasman population off Gabo Island—another limit in distribution.

Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophrys*).—One bird, an adult with an orange bill, followed the boat for most of the morning on December 3, until we were abreast of Robe.

White-capped Albatross (*Diomedea cauta*).—Though none was seen in South Australian waters, numbers were observed on December 2, just before we crossed the State line. All day, from about Moonlight Head to Cape Nelson, birds were being picked up. There was one astern at 7 a.m., three at 9 a.m., six at 1 p.m., 27 at 2 p.m., and 40 at 3 p.m. (when off Lady Julia Percy Island), and they continued to be present until nightfall. Next day, when crossing Lacedpede Bay, not one was about. There have been a few previous records of this species in South Australia. Dr. W. D. K. MacGillivray saw it off Port MacDonnell, and specimens have been found on the beach at Goolwa (Dr. A. M. Morgan), and 12 miles south of Millicent (Allen Ey), and at Encounter Bay (J. B. Cleland). Dr. E. W. Ferguson also reported seeing them as far west as the western end of Kangaroo Island (see "Emu," XIX, p. 176; XXI, p. 107; "S.A. Ornithologist," XV, p. 68; Trans. Roy. Soc. S. Aust., LXIII, p. 311). In south-eastern Australia also it has not a very extended range. The question arises as to the breeding ground of the birds photographed in the Great Australian Bight, not far west of the South Australian border, in November, 1929 ("The Emu," vol. XXXV, 1935, p. 32; *ibid.*, vol. XXXVII, 1937, p. 60). It may be one of the many secrets awaiting some fortunate investigator of the Recherche group.

Black-faced Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax fuscescens*).—A party of some 500-600 was seen on a rocky ledge of an island opposite Point Donnington, near Port Lincoln, evidently a rookery. Odd birds were seen near Coffin's Bay and Kingscote. The Pied Cormorant (*P. varius*) was not identified from the ship.

Little Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*).—It was seen in the river going up to Port Adelaide.

Australian Gannet (*Sula serrator*).—Three birds were seen 10 miles east of Cape Borda; one had "ragged" wings due to moulting.

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*).—A flock of about 20 was noticed crossing Backstairs Passage from the vicinity of Cape St. Albans towards Fleurieu Peninsula on December 12.

Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*).—Seen at Coffin's Bay and along the northern coastline of Kangaroo Island.

Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).—Generally distributed. At Kingscote jetty a mixed company of 15 adults and eight immature birds in various stages of plumage development enabled one to appreciate the course of the maturity changes in the bare parts. In the full-plumaged adult the beak and legs are a brilliant red and the iris is pale yellowish (? white—Eds.) with a red ring (i.e., eyelid). In the youngest, with brown feathers in the plumage, the legs are brown and the beak and iris dark. As the birds mature the beak reddens from the base forwards, the tip remaining dark for some time. The legs pass through orange-brown to red. A red circle appears around the iris and the inner part grows paler. The immature birds have a weaker, shriller note, tern-like in quality.

Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*).—Several adults and immature birds were noted at Port Lincoln, and odd birds at Wedge Island and at Kingscote.

Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).—Two were seen off Rivoli Bay, two more off Guichen Bay, another on the run across Lacedpede Bay, but the majority were observed in St. Vincent Gulf and the eastern portion of Investigator Strait, and sparingly to Wedge Island. None was met with in Spencer Gulf proper or in the Port Lincoln-Coffin's Bay area. They were particularly numerous along the eastern shore of St. Vincent Gulf, and as many as 20 birds were counted at the one time between Glenelg and Outer Harbour. Both colour phases were seen. In contrast to the conditions in February-March, the majority appeared to be lacking the elongated central tail feathers and some had gaps in the wings due to replacement of wing quills. The specimen which was collected on the first cruise, on February 14, was in entirely fresh plumage, except for the two outermost primaries, which had not yet been renewed. Somewhat similar moulting data are given by R. A. Falla (Rec. Auck. Inst. Mus., vol. 2, 1936, pp. 4-5) for the few New Zealand skins he was able to examine. Six *S. parasiticus* were all in some stage of moulting, a January-shot bird was in the preliminary stages and two birds collected on April 16 were completing it. A December *S. pomarinus* was in full moulting.

Pied Oyster-catcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*).—A pair was noted near Kingscote.

Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*).—Four birds were seen at Kingscote.