

Mr. H. C. D. Collyer's account of a Migration of
the Short-tailed Shearwater (Mutton-Bird)

(*Puffinus tenuirostris*).

On the afternoon of 26th April, 1938, Mr. H. C. D. Collyer, of 164 Esplanade Brighton, S.A., telephoned that Mutton-Birds were passing down the Gulf of Saint Vincent in great numbers. His letter of 28th April confirmed the message and added:—
“The Mutton-Birds had been noticed over the waters of the Gulf all day long on the 26th April. Their progress was always southward. Their swooping flight between the lines of combers was partially hidden, as if for a brief period they rested on the water. They could be seen through the telescope as far out as the horizon, but at sunset and till darkness fell I noticed that they came within half a mile of the shore. One bird seemed to be tired, for it settled two or three times on the water then fluttered up again. I patrolled the beach from Minda to Marino throughout the 27th April, but came across the remains of one bird only in the late afternoon on my final patrol just after high water. I found the one perfect specimen barely 100 yards from my residence. I had probably missed seeing it before as sand partially covered it. (It was an immature bird, total length, 39 cm.; wing-spread, 87 cm.; weight, 250 grammes). On the morning of 28th April I made a hurried patrol, but I saw no trace of a bird.” In his letter of 9th May he added further particulars:—“It is most difficult to get information from fishermen—either professional or amateur—lack of interest, I presume. As to estimating their numbers, I am greatly puzzled, for I would not like to mislead. Just before dusk I counted

one flock of twenty-five within pier-head distance of the beach. Others were passing at various distances visible to the naked eye. As I stated before—earlier in the day I saw many through the telescope among the combers right out apparently to the skyline. I was told they were seen moving southward early in the morning of the 26th April, so taking an average I think a fair estimate would be for twelve hours of daylight—500 per minute, 30,000 per hour, and 360,000 for the twelve hours. Then, allowing for others passing before daylight and the rearguard after sunset, one could say safely, not less than half-a-million passed during the twenty-four hours.
