

BIRD NOTES

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAILS IN GULF ST VINCENT — On 11 March, 1978 we left Edithburgh for Outer Harbor by yacht at 0700. Our course was approximately ENE, while a 20-knot wind blew from the NNE. About 10 km from Edithburgh I noticed three birds to the south, flying slowly into the wind in a laboured jerky manner. These were identified as White-throated Needletails *Hirundapus caudacutus*. We continued to see them for the next 50 km. They flew past the boat for five hours, singly or in small groups of up to six birds, at approximately 10-minute intervals. In all, about 150 birds were observed in Gulf St Vincent. The moderation of the wind to 10 knots produced no significant change in either bird numbers or frequency of sightings. These factors remained fairly constant throughout the five hours of observation.

In the middle of the gulf, the northerly petered out, and light variable winds blew from all quarters for about two hours, ahead of a cool weak southerly change which produced a few spots of rain. After the breeze shifted to the south, no more swifts were recorded. While the wind was northerly, there was thick red dust, in which winged insects were plentiful even 30 km from land. The swifts seemed to be feeding continuously, which probably accounted for their slow erratic flight about 10 to 20 m above sea level. — DAVID VINCENT.

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