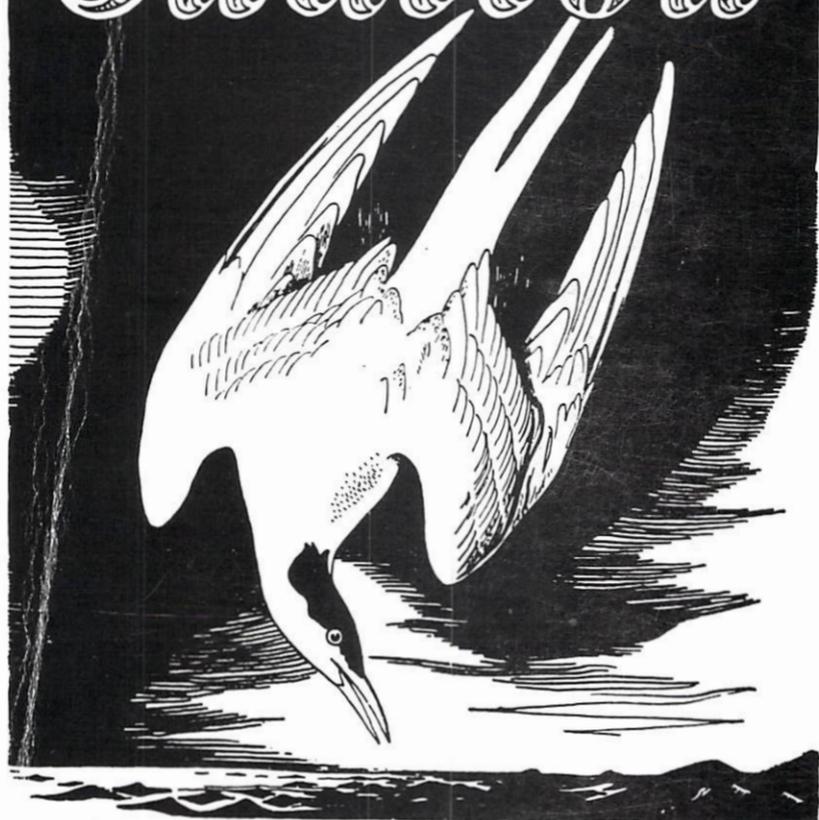


# *the* Sea Swallow



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

## ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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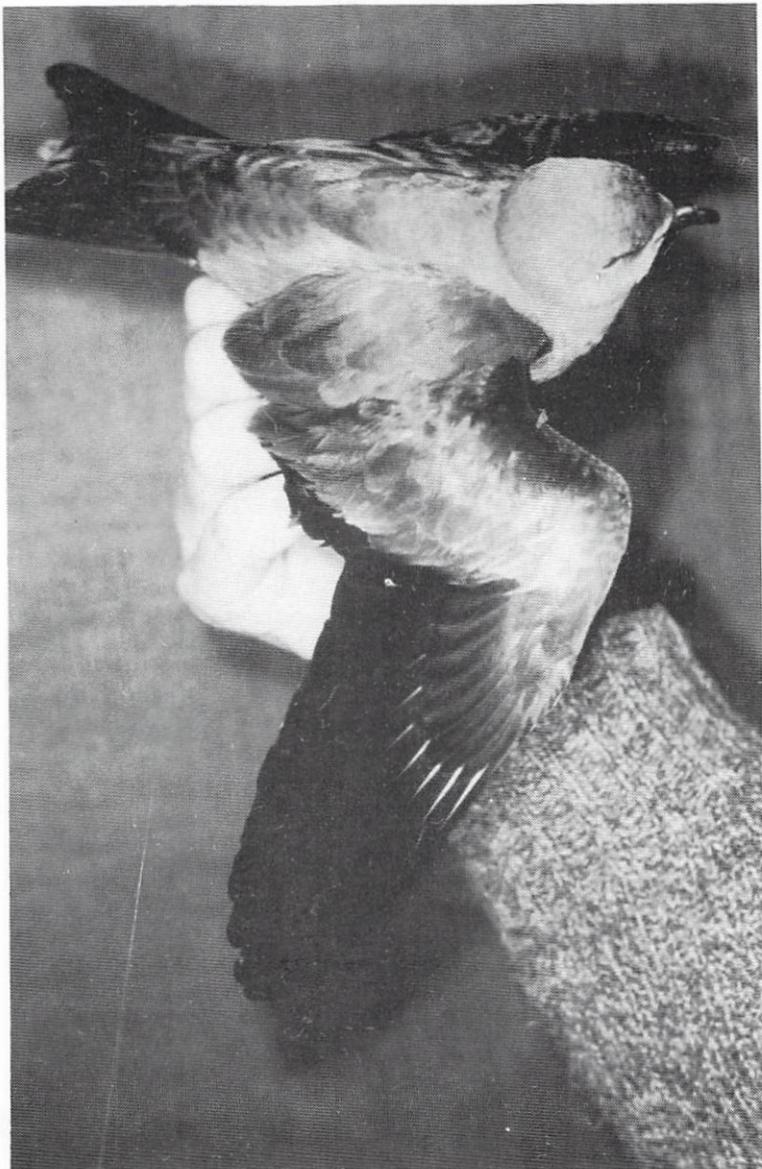
*Aims and activities.* The primary aim of the Society is to promote a  
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Completed record forms (both seabirds and landbirds) should be sent  
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Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor  
(see instructions to authors inside back cover).

\* An application form for membership is at page 71 in this edition of *Sea Swallow*.



Dark-rumped Petrel caught and photographed at Tynemouth,  
6 July 1990 (see page 63)

*Photo: Mark Cubitt*

## FOREWORD

As this volume was prepared for press, we learnt the sad news of the death of our President, Admiral Sir Peter Stanford. Full tribute is paid elsewhere to his generous commitment to RNBWS. One lasting memorial will be his lively and perceptive Forewords to *Sea Swallow*, which brought encouragement and a challenge to our membership worldwide, and especially to those fortunate enough to be serving at sea.

It is significant that it is at this moment that seafarers face uncertain, yet exciting prospects. 'Options for change' in the post Cold War era are initially bringing to the RN and other military forces the contraction which our Merchant Naval colleagues have endured for several decades. At the same time, the urgent need to monitor and protect our environment is receiving unprecedented acknowledgement from political, military and commercial leaders, but without signs of undue commitment of resources to the task.

In this situation, RNBWS stands as the only RN/MN society, of which I am aware, with a direct involvement in environmental observations. With good organisation, and liaison with government agencies and other scientific bodies, the work of the amateur observer can have immense significance. The quality of such efforts can be seen in this publication, and the pages of the Meteorological Office quarterly, '*The Marine Observer*'. With plans afoot to place sampling equipment in RN and MN ships of opportunity, it seems to me that there is an urgent need to promote awareness and enthusiasm for the natural world amongst the ships companies. I believe that we should redouble our RNBWS efforts to achieve this, and to bring others to experience the rewards that flow from our interest.

This is not, however, work which is confined to the seafarers. Right now, urgent tasks ashore need our support, including participation in the MOD Bird Count on RN lands. Your Committee, assisted by RNBWS Local Representatives and other members, have been assessing new initiatives in the field of expedition and conservation work. Details will appear in the Bulletin. I do ask you to join in an endeavour which may bring many new members into RNBWS, as well as bringing you fresh enjoyment and understanding of the world around us.

**STOP PRESS** I am very pleased to be able to report that Vice-Admiral David Dobson has kindly agreed to become our new President.

MICHAEL BARRITT, Chairman

## EDITORIAL

This issue tells its own story, I hope, and members will be pleased to note a number of new names contributing records and photographs this year; both Captain Neil Cheshire (seabirds) and myself (landbirds) have been kept busy. The standard of observations, and identification details and sketches in many of these have been exemplary. Sadly, a number of regular observers have retired from sea-going service, including Roy Westwater, and Stephen Chapman has finally had to retire, due to pressure of work, from being Assistant Editor. But Chief Officer Martin Littlewood has shown how computers can be used to analyse the results of records over a period, and I hope this will be the trend for the future. And Bill Bourne has been busy observing at first hand the situation in the Persian Gulf. As always, there is much competition for space, and some material has had to be held over to next year.

My postbag has continued to be heavy throughout the year, from members worldwide. It is gratifying how many researchers and ornithologists ashore have shown interest, requesting reprints or back numbers; correspondents within the last 12 months have been from Sweden, Malta, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, France, Canada, the Soviet Union, Japan, and USA (Alaska, South Carolina, Maryland and Arizona). So, the message to our regular observers is that their efforts are well appreciated by a very wide circle of readers. Please keep the records coming in, and also contributions of articles etc. for *Sea Swallow*. I have now updated my word-processor, and am learning new tricks. Hopefully I will become quicker with it....

But, we still need a steady infusion of new members. Please do your utmost to spread the word, and recruit newcomers to join our joint endeavours. Good luck, and please keep in touch.

MICHAEL CASEMENT.

## OBITUARY

Admiral Sir Peter Stanford G.C.B., L.V.O. 1930-1991

Members will have read with great sadness of the death of our President, after a series of illnesses, courageously fought, on 22nd May. The Memorial Service, held at Hambleton Parish Church on 25th June, was packed to overflowing by his contemporary senior officers and friends, and many glowing tributes were made to his distinguished service career.

I first knew him in 1956, when we served together in the same squadron of Seaward Defence Boats, at Portland, and we shared common interests in birdwatching and fly-fishing from those earliest days. Thus it was, in 1983, that I prevailed upon him to accept the invitation to succeed Admiral Sir Nigel Henderson, as President of RNBWS. Despite the intense pressures of work, as Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, and especially the Falklands War, he made time to give invaluable advice and help behind the scenes, and steered the Society through a difficult period. I was in Washington DC, at the time, and I personally owe a huge debt to him.

We will miss him greatly, but will remember him for his brilliant intellect, his quiet enthusiasm, and his many ideas for widening the appeal of birdwatching for seamen everywhere. The best tribute to him will be to implement these for the future - as our Chairman has suggested in his foreword. M.B.C.

# THE SEABIRDS OF ARABIA

By Dr. W.R.P. Bourne

## INTRODUCTION

Arabia is not a place which instantly springs to mind as a good habitat for seabirds. However, it forms the boundary between the African and Asiatic land-masses in one direction, and the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean in the other, each of which has some distinct birds while others move between them; it has a very varied coastline, ranging from the Levant coast and wetlands around the Nile Delta and Suez Canal immediately to the north, through the deep Red Sea to the west and the shallow Persian or Arabian Gulf (hereafter called 'the Gulf') to the east, to the Indian Ocean to the south. It therefore has quite a rich seabird community.

For a long time these birds did not receive much attention owing to the difficulty of visiting the area, while those romantics who did reach it are perhaps often better described as creative artists than scientists. The foundation of the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society in the late 1940s occurred at a fortunate time from this point of view, since it coincided with an expansion of the sea trade from Suez round to the Gulf, associated with much hydrographic activity following the explosive development of the oil industry, which resulted in many new observations (Bourne 1988a).

Early observations revealed the occurrence of a remarkable community of southern seabirds wintering over seasonal upwelling off south-east Arabia during the south-west monsoon (Bourne 1960, 1963), investigated by Roger Bailey (1964, 1966) during the course of the International Indian Ocean Expedition in the 1960s. Subsequently there have also been observations in the Gulf (Morris 1970, Nakamura 1974, Tuck 1974, Simpson 1987), and more information has also started to become available from the breeding sites (Gallagher *et al.* 1984, Gallagher 1985, 1990), which is now being supplemented by a growing number of land-based organisations, but there has been little more systematic work at sea.

I first visited the area in RFA *Tidespring* with the Armilla Patrol during the 1987-88 winter. We arrived via the Suez Canal on 4 Nov and spent much of the time around the apex of a tongue of the deep water extending into the Gulf of Oman, calling at Fujairah at intervals, and making three visits to the Arabian Sea in mid-November, mid-December and early January, three to the lower Gulf in late November, late December and late January, and leaving for home via Suez on 20 Feb. I rejoined the ship in Dubai on 31 Jul and she returned home again almost immediately, passing through the Suez Canal on 28 Aug (Bourne 1988 b,c,d, 1989).

I then returned in RFA *Sir Percivale* for Operation Granby over the 1990-91 winter, passing through the Suez Canal on 20 Oct and arriving at Al Jubayl in eastern Saudi Arabia on 30 Oct. We then retired to the shallow water in the Gulf approaches, making trips to the central Gulf of Oman in early November and mid-December, periodic

visits to the U.A.E. ports, and another to Al Jubayl on 24-25 Jan, before returning to the waters north of the U.A.E. again. We then moved slowly north-west up the Gulf, visiting Bahrain in early February and early March, eventually arriving off Kuwait on 10 Mar, after which I flew home from Bahrain.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the hospitality of a number of local naturalists, including Colin Richardson, 'Bish' Brown and Gerry Ricks who took me round the U.A.E., Dr. Reza Khan who showed us his interesting collection of local birds in Dubai Zoo, and Eric Hirschfeld who took me round Bahrain.

## NARRATIVE

In order to provide a more coherent story I will describe the summer visit first and then combine the observations during the two winter ones.

In early August the weather was oppressively hot and humid in the Gulf approaches, with light west winds and a persistent haze, and we saw rather few birds at sea apart from occasional individuals and small parties of Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* in the lower Gulf, Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* with smaller numbers of other terns and occasional Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichi* over the continental shelf, and several parties of Audubon's Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri* with four Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* along the edge of the deep water in the Gulf of Oman east of Fujairah.

Returning home round Arabia in mid-August we saw hundreds of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, scores of Jouanin's Petrels *Bulweria fallax* and Flesh-footed Shearwaters *Puffinus carneipes*, and smaller numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *P. pacificus*, Audubon's Shearwaters, phalaropes and cetaceans along the edge of the continental shelf where the SW monsoon was blowing between Ras al Hadd and



Socotra Cormorant colony, December 1987

Photo: Bill Bourne

the central Gulf of Aden, and more terns with occasional Red-billed Tropicbirds *Phaethon aethereus* and first Masked and then Brown Boobies *Sula dactylatra* and *S. leucogaster*, when we passed over the continental shelf; most occurring off the Kuria Muria Islands, around the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and in the southern Red Sea. There were no birds over the deep water of the central Red Sea, but hundreds of the smaller northern gulls and terns and a few of the larger ones had already arrived along the Suez Canal on 21 Aug, with a particularly interesting concentration where we left the canal through the cut between the lagoons east of Port Said and passed through the Nile outflow out into the Mediterranean.

On the way out to the Gulf in the autumn there were still dozens of gulls but now only a few terns along the Suez Canal on 20 Oct and 4 Nov, and hundreds of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* were seen flying up the Gulf of Suez at dusk to roost off Suez town in November. There were no birds in the central Red Sea again, but we saw six Audubon's Shearwaters, 34 Brown and four Masked Boobies, four Red-billed Tropicbirds and two Bridled Terns when we passed through the shallow strait east of the Hanish Islands in November. We met the first Jouanin's Petrels and Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* (not seen elsewhere) in the central Gulf of Aden, and Wilson's Storm-petrels and phalaropes off its mouth in October. By then it had become calmer off south-east Arabia, and the Jouanin's and Wilson's Petrels, Masked Boobies and phalaropes had also begun to spread east round into the central Gulf of Oman.

By the time we reached the Gulf in the autumn, the temperature was falling and the weather becoming more variable as we came under the influence of depressions passing east to the north. We found that there were now many large bird flocks feeding over fish shoals which appeared to be moving south down the west side of the Gulf. They included hundreds of Black-headed Gulls and occasional Brown-headed Gulls *L. brunnicephalus* (Bourne and Bundy 1990) within ten miles of the shore, and scores of larger gulls of the Lesser Black-backed *Larus fuscus* group further out to sea (apparently mainly belonging to the form *taimyrensis* and its allies, with some groups of *armenicus*, which I am inclined to think are probably all best treated as a distinct species Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini*; Bourne *in press*). There were still scores of Sooty Gulls at Sir Abu Nair Island, and flocks of White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa* and Audubon's Shearwaters and occasional other terns in the Gulf approaches, although few terns and no shearwaters were seen further up the Gulf.

Particular concern has been expressed about one of the native Arabian seabirds, the Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, which used to breed in vast numbers on the lee (south-east) side of the rocky summits of the lower Gulf islands (*Sea Swallow* 18: 77-78) before it was displaced by oil terminals. Colin Richardson reported that he first heard of a colony which has started nesting behind the dunes on one of the U.A.E. coastal islands instead early in 1986, when there were thought to be about 40,000 birds (*Gazelle* 2(1):3, 2(12):6, Howe 1989).



Young White-cheeked Tern aboard RFA *Sir Percivale*, 13 Nov '90.

**Note.:** The grey upperparts, wing coverts and tail with pale feather edges, darker crown, carpal bar and primaries, white forehead and upperparts, long, red-brown legs and distinctive fairly massive, curved dark bill (which becomes dark red in the adult).

*Photo:* Bill Bourne

It appears from the size of the oldest young that they must usually start laying in groups by September, when they are very successful at first, with clutches of up to five eggs, and continue breeding with a declining success into the New Year, when the last young starve to death between January and March.

When we visited the site at what must have been about the climax of the breeding cycle on 2 Dec '87 there were some 30,000 to 100,000 adults in all stages of breeding activity, attended by several hundred scavenging Lesser Black-back-type gulls. One group of birds with eggs had one clutch of one, 17 of two, 11 of three, and one of four, but no longer any of five, an average of 2.5, though they were still breeding successfully, with legions of growing young and little sign of mortality yet. Huge flocks of many thousands, including the first fledged young were later seen flying south down the coast in the mornings to feed on schooling fish off Dubai. There is apparently at least one other large colony further west (Chapman 1990). A Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* was also seen carrying a fish off Jebel Ali in Dec '90, so they may also nest in the autumn in this area.

In fine weather, the wintering gulls appeared to roost ashore, where some stayed to feed during the day while others dispersed high out to sea at dawn to feed over fish shoals, and if we were anchored, subsequently gathered around our ship to rest (Morris 1970, Bourne 1988d). When the prevailing local NNW 'Shamal' wind rose they would either stay ashore or drift SSE down the Gulf. By the time we moved south in December gull and tern flocks feeding over fish shoals had

become scarcer in the Gulf, but commoner along the edge of the continental shelf in the Gulf of Oman, where most of the southern petrels and terns had now left and been replaced by thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes and occasional parties of Grey Phalaropes *P. fulicarius*. Long lines of yellow scum soon appeared here which were difficult to identify at first, though similar material found off the beach north of Fujairah subsequently appeared to consist of fish eggs.

When we moved north up the Gulf in February 1991 we found that the gulls had become very mobile, moving SE out of the Gulf when the 'Shamal' rose, but starting to return NW again when it was replaced by milder SE winds. These NW movements became stronger as the spring migration began in late February and March, when hundreds of birds would sometimes stop to roost on the water around the ship overnight. By mid-February a few phalaropes had also started to spread north, presumably following the fish larvae back into the Gulf. W.F.Curtis reports that in 1989 most of the wintering gulls had left by the end of March, and the breeding terns reappeared soon afterwards.

During the mid-winter trips down into the Arabian Sea, and when we returned home in mid-February 1988, gulls and terns became scarce at sea after we left the Gulf of Oman, but smaller numbers of Jouanin's Petrels, Audubon's Shearwaters, Masked Boobies and phalaropes were still present off SE Arabia between Masirah Island and Ras Madraka. Audubon's Shearwaters and a few gulls and terns were also seen at the Strait of Bab el Mandeb. When passing through the Suez Canal on 20 Feb, we saw hundreds more gulls, including 171 apparent Armenian Gulls *Larus (heuglini?) armenicus* (distinguished from other Heuglin-type gulls by their small heads and short bills, which retain a dark mark at the tip in the adult), and later 874 Great Cormorants *P. carbo* flying high in skeins overhead from the Nile delta to roost in the lagoons to the east as we passed out of the north end of the canal at 1630.

## THE EFFECT OF WAR IN THE GULF

There was normally some floating garbage around the oilfields and shipping in the Gulf and its approaches, with more washed up on the beaches, but we only saw a few small oil-slicks and oiled birds within the Gulf, doubtless because of the draconian local oil pollution legislation, although a limited number of tar-balls, which presumably derived from vessels cleaning their tanks as they arrived in the Gulf of Oman, had washed up along the east coast of the U.A.E. After the Americans set the Iranian Rostam oil platform in the lower Gulf on fire in Oct '87, there were still thin fresh slicks 25 km to lee (SE) of the burning installation two months later, though they did not appear to have had much effect on the wildlife, and little pollution was seen along the west coast of the U.A.E. (Bourne 1989).

In view of the way in which the gulls appeared to move freely around the Gulf with the weather, it might have been expected that a good many oiled birds would have been seen among them when larger quantities of oil were released at Kuwait from late Jan '91. But although some 20,000

shore and water birds are estimated to have become oiled down the east coast of Saudi Arabia to the south, (according to Dennis (1991) and TV films mainly immature Socotra and adult Great Cormorants, Great-crested and Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* and *P. caspicus*, herons and gulls), only the normal proportion of about a dozen birds were noticed to be oiled among six to twelve thousand gulls seen during the winter. We only saw one badly oiled bird, a Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, when we eventually entered the oil off Kuwait on 10 March.

The possible impact of the smoke from the burning oilwells, on the other hand, appears to have been seriously underestimated. It first became evident when we arrived in the upper Gulf in early March and saw the setting sun disappear into the smoke drifting down the east coast of Saudi Arabia with the NNW prevailing wind. We next found that the sky remained dark and the horizon obscured at midday when the smoke-trail passed over Bahrain 400 km down-wind, while the visibility was reduced to a few hundred metres off Kuwait, where I soon had a recurrence of a nasty cough, developed on exposure to the London smogs of the 1950s, which lasted for weeks. Like other fogs, the smoke also brought down bird migrants.

From late Oct '90 until we entered the smoke off Kuwait on 10 Mar '91, I only saw a total of 17 stray landbird migrants at sea off eastern Arabia. Then, while we were in the smoke, we were visited within a few hours by a minimum of 35, including four Hoopoes *Upupa epops*, two Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, ten Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* (some oily), two Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, three Western Red-tailed Wheatears *Oenanthe x. xanthopyrma*, three Pied Wheatears *O. pleschanka*, two Desert Wheatears *O. deserti*, a Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica*, a Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, two White Wagtails *Motacilla alba*, a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, and two cock House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* (one moderately oiled). These all left again as soon as we emerged from the smoke except the sparrows, which may have come from another ship, and remained with us until we reached Bahrain.

## DISCUSSION

Most of the more methodical previous observations of seabirds around Arabia have either been made where both the local breeding birds and southern winter visitors tend to concentrate off the south-east coast, when upwelling is induced there by the south-west monsoon towards the end of the northern summer (Bailey 1966), or at the breeding stations in the summer (Gallagher *et al.* 1984). The present voyages provided a useful opportunity to make complementary observations over the shallower water inshore at a time when there was known to be some anomalous breeding of the larger seabirds, including in addition to the endemic Socotra Cormorant also the Red-billed Tropicbird, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and possibly the Caspian Tern in the Gulf, and boobies in the southern Red Sea (Morris 1962), during the northern autumn and winter.

These observations show that, in the first place, while I formerly placed much emphasis on the occurrence of each species of seabird at

a different distance from the shore in an area where the seasonal upwelling of cold water leads to a growth of plankton (Bourne 1963, Bailey 1966), the configuration of the coast and ocean floor may also be important; some birds such as the terns and cormorants tend to feed where tidal currents lead to the development of turbulence and mixing in the shallower water over the continental shelf; while others such as the petrels and phalaropes tend to concentrate where local turbulence occurs in the offshore currents around projections from the edge of the shelf.

Secondly, while most local seabirds appear to breed in the summer and move south to be replaced by birds from the north in the winter, there are also some interesting anomalies among the larger species. These may be due to the contrasting local climatic regimes of different parts of the region. Thus the Red Sea is generally hot, with north winds in the north throughout the year, and has a rich stable marine biology around the coast but a very sterile centre. The turbulence, which is likely to lead to a growth of plankton and increased food supply for birds, appears to be concentrated at the entrances to the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba in the north, and especially the shallow Strait of Bab el Mandeb to the south, where in the latter case it may be enhanced by the development of south winds in the winter. This might explain why the local boobies may breed in the autumn (Morris 1962).

On the other hand, there is a much more marked seasonal variation in conditions in the rest of the area. Thus the alternation of the monsoons along the SE coast of Arabia leads to a marked peak in welling, marine productivity and seabird activity in the late summer. Similarly, a marked seasonal fluctuation in the temperature in the northern Gulf leads to an influx of warm water from the Indian Ocean to compensate for evaporation in the summer, followed by an outflow of cool water enriched by the run-off of winter rain to the north, associated with a visible growth of plankton in the Gulf of Oman when the temperature falls in the winter.

The last situation at least may have led to a regular circular movement of some of the local fish which is exploited by the birds. Thus it would appear that the fish probably spawn in the Gulf of Oman as the plankton starts to proliferate there during the winter to provide food for their fry, which in turn provides food for plankton-eating birds such as the phalaropes which may follow it north as it drifts into the Gulf with the spring inflow. Then, as the larvae start growing in the Gulf during the summer, they provide food for larger birds taking medium-sized fish such as the terns which breed there then and leave with the adult fish as the temperature falls in the autumn. The full-grown fish are then taken by the largest seabirds breeding in the autumn along their route back to spawn in the Gulf of Oman.

A particularly complex situation appears to occur with the gulls, which although usually widespread and omnivorous, often also appear to be important predators on the larger fish. There are only two breeding species which both nest in the summer; the White-eyed Gull *Larus leucoptalmos*, which appears to be largely sedentary in the Red Sea, and the more migratory Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichi*, which appears to nest most commonly in the area of upwelling along the SE coast of Arabia

when it is at its maximum in the summer, feeding on fish-shoals offshore. These then usually leave for the south in the autumn, although a few adults remained feeding on fish shoals in the lee of Sir Abu Nair Island and immatures scavenged at Dubai fish-dock in the lower Gulf throughout the winter.

The breeding gulls are reinforced by a complex community of two small species, an uncertain number of medium and one large species in the winter. The abundant small Black-headed Gull occurs everywhere but seems particularly prone to scavenge inland and follow fish-shoals offshore. The closely related Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* specialises in feeding in shallow muddy water. There are also at least two medium-sized forms, Heuglin's Gull which is commoner out at sea to the south, and the Yellow-legged (Herring) Gull *L. cachinnans* which is commoner along the shore to the north; and the widespread huge, predatory Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*.

The impact of recent events upon this complex situation is difficult to assess, but it needs to be realised that this is not the first time that there has been oil pollution in the Gulf, and indeed there appears to have been an even worse incident when the Iraqis previously also attacked the Iranian Nowruz Oilfield in the NW Gulf at the same season in 1983. This led to remarkably little comment, or apparent evidence of subsequent damage. It is still uncertain how much harm may be caused to migrating birds by the smoke from the burning oil-wells, which potentially forms a barrier hundreds of kilometres long across their route from Africa to Asia, but it is once again notable here that all the birds we saw brought down soon passed on, and none actually came to grief. The situation might, however, be different if they were to become attracted to burning oil-wells in the same way as to lighthouses when they became lost in the dark.

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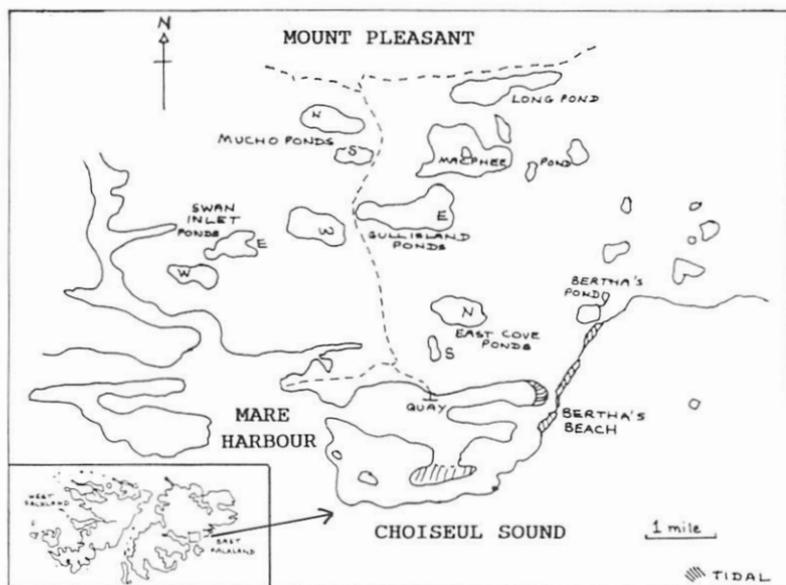
## BIRDWATCHING IN THE MARE HARBOUR AREA OF EAST FALKLAND

by Commander M.E. Winter, Royal Navy

I arrived in the Falklands by air, on 29 Jan 90, to assume my appointment with Naval Party 2010 aboard RFA *Diligence*. The ship arrived some nine days later, with Dr. W.R.B. (Bill) Bourne embarked. He started taking regular afternoon walks to explore the various lakes in the area, and I was able to join him for several of these. Birds listed in the following notes use the nomenclature of Robin Woods' most helpful *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands* (1988).

A walk on 8 Feb to Fox Point peninsula, on the south side of East Cove yielded high counts of Rock Shag *Phalacrocorax magellanicus*, Imperial/King Shag *P. atriceps albiventer*, Upland Geese *Chloephaga picta*, Flightless Steamer Duck *Tachyeres brachydactyla*, Two-banded Plovers *Charadrius falklandicus*, Rufous-chested Dotterel *C. modestus*, White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*, Brown-hooded Gull *L. maculipennis*, Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua* and South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. Also seen were Kelp Geese *Chloephaga hybrida*, Blackish *Haematopus ater* and Magellanic Oystercatchers *H. leucopodus*, a Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Antarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*, Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularoides* and Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*.

In February the cove itself was playing host to a variety of birds, including Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus*, South American Terns, Kelp Gulls, Dolphin Gulls, Southern Giant Petrels *Macronectes*



*giganteus*, Rock and Imperial Shags, and Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*; one was seen sitting on a mooring rope eight feet from the gangway. As winter approached, the penguins, terns, shags and herons withdrew, although a single Magellanic Penguin remained to stay overnight on the slipway. What was noticeable was the large numbers of Flightless Steamer Ducks in or near the Cove; in May there were at least 200. Also noted was an influx of Sheathbills *Chionis alba* - up to 36 max; despite their fluttering and erratic flight and 50 kt winds, they seemed to progress to windward.

Immediately north of Mare Harbour jetty, is a relatively small pond (East Cove Pond (South) - see map), which I continued to visit after WRPB's departure in mid-March. This is about a mile away, and a pleasant 1.5 hour walk; observations and dates are shown in the matrix below (Fig. 1). Especially pleasing was the first sighting in this area of Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*, on 18 March; Chief Petty Officer Calderwood, of HMS *Otter*, counted 12 on the day following (19th). The matrix shows that numbers of Silver Teal *Anas versicolor* built up, at the expense of Yellow-billed Teal *A. flavirostris*, until May. Colder weather, strong winds, and the occasional freezing of the lake led to the drop in numbers by the end of July.

**Fig.1 Birds seen at East Cove Pond (South) 1990**

DATE	12/2	6/3	12/3	18/3	8/4	13/4	5/5	16/6	15/7	22/7
Silvery Grebe	3	6	6	6	6	9				
<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>										
Upland Goose	3	6	not counted							
Crested Duck	6	18	12	9	12	8	8	8	2	2
Flightless Steamer Duck	7	10	4	6	9	8	8	6	6	4
Speckled Teal	26	99	50+	74	69	39	5	1		
Chiloe Wigeon		1				3 (imm)				
Yellow-billed Pintail	12	9	23	17	19	-	8			
Silver Teal		5	3	1	10	12	28	1		
Red Shoveler				1	5	5	5 (4M, 1F)			
Rufous-chested Dotterel	1		30?		12					
Skua <i>Catharacta</i> sp.			1							
White-rumped Sandpiper		1		4						
Dark-faced Ground-tyrant				1						1
Falkland Pipit				2	2		1		1	
Grass Wren					3					
Black-throated Finch				19	6			14		

Gull Island Pond (West) also provided some interest. On 26 May I counted 53 Black-necked Swans *Cygnus melanocoryphus*, 13 Yellow-billed Teal, and three White-tufted Grebes *Rollandia rolland*, including one immature.

**Bertha's Beach.** Some of the sightings on 8 Feb (see para 2 above), include the southern end of Bertha's, and the lake at the northern end (Bertha's Pond) contained many of those species already mentioned. I also noted in this area Turkey Vultures *Cathartes aura*, Crested *Caracara*

*plancus* and Striated Caracara *Phalacrocorax australis*, Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, and a single poor Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome* in the middle of about 300 Gentoos. A single King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* was also seen at Bertha's, staying several weeks - I possess a good photograph of WRPB with it. As I was leaving (at the end of July), Rufous-chested Dotterel, sporting their breeding plumage, were back in small numbers, and 160+ Two-banded Plovers. Had spring arrived I wondered?

The Mare Harbour area also has a good selection of landbirds: Grass Wren *Cistothorus platensis*, Black-throated Finch *Melanodera melanodera*, Falkland Pipit *Anthus correndera*, Dark-faced Ground-tyrant *Muscisaxicola macloviana*, snipe (unidentified) *Gallinago* sp., Long-tailed Meadow-lark *Sturnella loyca* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*.

**South Georgia.** In late February/early March I went with *Diligence*, accompanied by WRPB, to South Georgia, and benefited tremendously from his knowledge, though I missed seeing a Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera* and the Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*, because I was eating lunch! I attempted to record similar data on my second and third trips to South Georgia in late April/early May, and June/July, and these are now with WRPB. On my third trip, I was delighted to see an Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*, for about three minutes on 7 July, in position 380nm east of Falkland Is. On 1 June I photographed in the hand a Magellan Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides magellani*, which came aboard in Falkland Sound; this was the first confirmed sighting for some time.

**Landbirds.** The most commonly seen at sea is the Cattle Egret - ten on three separate occasions. Of most interest was a Peregrine Falcon, eating a recently caught diving-petrel; it left blood and remains on an explosives locker. It arrived at dusk on 21 March, when near Stanley, and remained for almost 24 hours.

As is readily apparent, there are a wide variety of birds to be seen in the Mare Harbour area, and the joy of it is that the majority of good sites take less than half a day to visit.

**Mammals.** Finally, for those interested in mammals, both Commersons *Cephalorhynchus commersonii* and Peales Dolphins *Lagenorhynchus australis* have frequently played around the ship and our small boats - in one case even rubbing up against the legs of someone standing up to his waist in water, luckily wearing a 'multifab' suit, I hasten to add! Commersons Dolphins are to be seen in Mare Harbour and Bertha's Beach, and Peales at Saunders Island and Fox bay. Sightings at sea of whales, dolphins and seals should be reported to the Falkland Island Fisheries Department, who will provide guidance information, and reporting forms.

Commander M.E. Winter, RN., 6 Atkinson Close, Gosport, PO12 2BZ

## FLY RIVER UPDATE

by Captain D.M. Simpson, MN.

I returned to the Fly River in May 1990, after an absence of two years. This time I was in command of MV *Bosset Chief*, a new OBO mini-bulker specially designed for hauling copper concentrate downriver, and oil upstream. I spent the next three months on this vessel almost entirely on the Fly River, except for three short runs across the Gulf of Papua to Port Moresby to pick up containers and fuel.

Little had changed while I had been away; there were now more ships carrying copper concentrate, and this increased traffic had caused some obvious erosion of the river banks, especially in the upper reaches where the river is narrow. The human population along the river banks had increased, again in the upper reaches, with some of the native villages now being much larger. This probably reflects an increased number of refugees from Indonesian Irian Jaya.

I am pleased to be able to say that I could detect no obvious increase in pollution, or the effects of pollution; the constant outflow of water appears to be taking care of the problem. Ok Tedi Mining have their own environmental department which monitors the water condition along the river, but I was unable to discover just what their findings reveal. No doubt there must be some deterioration in conditions, but it was not discernible to me. We are still eating Barramundi fish and prawns caught in the river, so far without anyone I know of being poisoned.

I continued to lengthen my already sizeable Fly River bird list, with the addition of such species as Coronated Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus coronulatus*, Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*, White-headed Shelduck *Tadorna radjah*, and Streak-headed Honey-eater *Pycnopygius stictocephalus* etc.

In June I managed to make landings on Wabuda Island, in the delta, and there found more interesting species as Mangrove Robin *Eopsaltria*



MV *Kiunga Chief* aground August 1990. It was a month before the river rose enough to refloat her.

Photo: Captain D.M. Simpson, MN

*pulverulenta*, Broad-billed Flycatcher *Miagra ruficollis* and Black Butcherbird *Cracticus quoyi*. With the aid of my telescope, in the top of one of the tallest trees on the island, I observed a beautiful little mammal - the Spotted Cuscus *Phalanger maculatus*.

Even the short runs across the Gulf of Papua produced seabirds new to me, namely Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* and White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*. Many Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula* were seen off Umuda Island, a species not recorded on my two earlier tours. On 26 August, in the Gulf of Papua, an adult White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* was sighted; this species is listed in the Field Guide as a vagrant. On leaving the *Bosset Chief* in September, I spent a week birdwatching at 'ARM 100' - but that is the subject of the article below.

Captain D.M. Simpson MN., 4 Ruswarp Lane, Whitby, North Yorks, YO21 1ND.

## BIRDWATCHING MEMORIES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by Captain D.M. Simpson, MN.

On 24 September 1990 I signed off the MV *Bosset Chief*, having completed a third tour of duty on Papua New Guinea's Fly River. I had elected to spend a week birdwatching in the lower reaches of the river, and had arranged to stay with Dick Randolph, the only white man resident in the area. Dick has a small sawmill, trade store and a boatyard at 'ARM 100', ie. 100 miles upstream from the northern entrance of the Fly River at Korimoro Point.

This proved to be a very interesting, and at times, exciting stay. It would take a hefty volume to do the place full justice, but I have singled out one particular day's experience to relate, in the hope that it will serve to give a genuine 'feel' for the place. The day chosen is 26 September.

I managed to force myself out of bed at 0500, despite the copious amount of gin consumed the previous evening. It is pitch dark, the generator is off, and I have to bumble around with a flashlight to search out the kettle from the amazing amount of clutter in Dick's kitchen. In the process, I almost stand on a beautiful tree-frog, that has found its way inside. I take time off to study this creature by the light of my torch beam; it is a lovely emerald green colour, with attractive black eyes.

Finally, I manage to get the old gas stove going, and boil up the kettle of river water - it hasn't rained here for weeks, and Dick's rainwater tank is as dry as a bone. Two mugs of black coffee later, and I am ready to go; the first hint of light is in the eastern sky. Dick, his Papuan wife and their twin boys are still fast asleep, as I head out for the bush. I find my way through the deserted sawmill and onto the still uncompleted airstrip. In the thickets that line the airstrip I disturb many Common Scrub Fowl *Megapodius freycinet* and Stephan's Ground Doves *Chalcophaps stephani*. It takes me some time to locate the start of the trail, at the end of the airstrip, which leads up to the ridge. This goes off at a tangent from the Fly River, and stretches for miles in a north easterly direction, and it is here that I intend to spend the day birding.

The trail passes through dense bamboo-like thickets, on its way up to the ridge, and these are the favourite haunt of the beautiful Emperor Fairy Wren *Malurus cyanocephalus*. I arouse many of these, as well as a flock of small finches which turn out to be White-spotted Mannikins *Lonchura leucosticta*. Meanwhile Grey Crows *Corvus tristis* are screaming out their high-pitched protests in the branches above my head. On the top of the ridge, pacing through good rain forest, I flush Black-billed Brush-turkeys *Talegalla fuscirostris* and Scrub Fowl. Their incubating mounds are all over the place here.

It is almost daylight now, but still gloomy under the canopy. I hear various creatures crashing away from me through the undergrowth and suddenly I'm aware of something big and very close; I freeze, and there, less than 15 ft away, is a magnificent Southern (or Double-wattled) Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius*. Sighting me, it trots away quite sedately. Dick tells me that if one happens to wear a blue shirt, this great bird may mistake one for another Cassowary, (the adult has a bright blue head and neck) and launch an attack; a kick from those lethal feet can disembowel one. I do not know whether to believe this tale, as Dick tells me lots of tall stories. During my stay here I was to meet up with several Cassowaries, none of which showed any interest in attacking me, and seemed only too anxious to get away. But I did not take to wearing blue shirts! Nevertheless one's first eyeball to eyeball meeting with a full-grown Cassowary in the New Guinea rain forest is an exciting and rewarding experience, never to be forgotten.

As I continue along the ridge trail, I disturb many birds such as Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*, Eclectus Parrots *Eclectus roratus*, and Red-cheeked Parrots *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*, Blyth's Hornbills *Rhyticeros plicatus* and Rufous-bellied Kookaburras *Dacelo gaudichaud*. Wave after wave of lorries and imperial pigeons fly overhead, on their way to some distant feeding place. Many of these birds, particularly the Dusky Lory *Pseudeos fuscata* and Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor*, roost at night on the small islands in the river delta.

At about 1000, I come to a small clearing where I can sit down and see into the canopy from the ridge crest. Here are a host of birds belonging to the unique Australasian family of honeyeaters, feeding upon the masses of pink and white blooms. I am delighted to have a close look at New Guinea's tiniest bird, the Pygmy Honeyeater *Oedistoma pygmaeum* - only 2.8" long. Here I also find my first ever Red-throated Myzomela *Myzomela myzomela*. Having obtained two new 'ticks', my twitchers' instinct is satisfied; whatever happens now, the day has been a success, but there is better yet to come.

The trail dips down from the ridge into a swamp, which I manage to negotiate with some difficulty, then back up onto the ridge, through thick forest for another two or three miles. Along this stretch I see several beautiful Blue Jewel Babblers *Ptilorrhoa caerulescens*, a Common Paradise Kingfisher *Tanyptera galatea*, and from the ground in some dense thickets I disturbed a small colony of Papuan Nightjars

*Eurostopodus papuensis*. The trail is now becoming very indistinct, and I am growing uneasy. Finally, it dips down into another swamp, and I decide this is far enough.

Heading back, I soon find that I've lost my original trail. Finally I make it back to the first swamp, but at a different crossing-point. It looks too dangerous to attempt to cross here; I will probably get stuck, and become a meal for that big crocodile, which my imagination tells me is around here, awaiting his chance. A heavy rustling from the undergrowth causes me to almost jump out of my skin, but it is not a 'croc', but a huge monitor lizard, which goes blithely on its way, paying me no attention.

Wow! It is time to calm down and take stock of the situation. I fight the rising panic within me by telling myself that it is only mid-day, and there is still plenty of time to find my way back out of this mess. Besides, if I do get benighted out here, I have sufficient food, water, and a flashlight, and it won't be the first time I've slept out in the jungle. But the thought of crocodiles does bother me, for I've seen some mighty specimens from time to time, along the river.

I retrace my steps, and finally arrive back at the second swamp. As I come over the hillock down to the swamp, a great bird rises from under my feet. It flies awkwardly and clumsily, almost vertically, and lands on a branch about 25 ft above me. We stare at each other, both in a state of shock, but what is it? It is a bittern, but not the usual Black Bittern or Rufous Night-heron. This bird has a grey head, with blackish crown and blackish bars on the face. It is buff below, with black bars on the throat and breast, pale yellow legs, a dark bill and yellow iris. I am absolutely enthralled, for this is my long sought-after Forest Bittern *Zonerodius heliosylus*, one of New Guinea's best endemic birds. I had searched for this, without success, many times along creeks in the Upper Fly around Kiunga; this is indeed a great moment for me. The rain forest gives up its secrets very slowly, and this one has been well worth waiting for. Had I not succeeded in getting myself lost, I would have missed this gem. The bird gives me a good two minutes to admire it, before taking off and flying deep into the swamp.

With fresh heart and elated spirits I hunt around, and finally locate my own boot-prints, and find the original trail. Feeling fine now that I am no longer lost, and still basking in the glow of seeing the Forest Bittern, I take a break for lunch. I had been hanging onto it, thinking it might have to sustain me through a long uncomfortable night. I sit down on one of the surface roots of a huge tree.

Whilst enjoying my 'nosh', I watch a Sooty Thicket-fantail *Rhipidura threnothorax* exploring the undergrowth and bushes for flies. It is holding its tail spread in a fan, and makes a pretty picture. Suddenly, and mysteriously from out of the tangled web of roots, appears a beautiful pheasant-like bird, with a whitish nape and red-brown wings. It walks around the roots, pumping its large tail, quite oblivious of my presence. This is another New Guinea speciality, the Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis*, another great thrill for me. I had not expected to find this species

here, as my field guide (*Birds of New Guinea*. Bruce M. Beehler, Thane K. Prass and Dale A. Zimmerman) suggests it to be more a bird of the hills. It is flat delta country around here, with no sizeable hills. It is now stinking hot and humid, with plenty of biting bugs, but I can honestly say I have never felt happier in my life. However, my peace is about to be rudely shattered.

The Pheasant Pigeon has left, as mysteriously as it had appeared, and now comes a crashing noise emanating from the undergrowth. It seems to be coming straight towards me - a Cassowary on the run? I await its appearance with bated breath. From out of the brush bursts a huge and savage looking wild boar, heading straight towards me. I leapt to my feet, flung out my arms, and gave forth a mighty yell. This ruse worked well; the animal pulled up, caught sight of me, and with a disgusted grunt turned in its tracks and crashed off the way it had come.

This was almost too much for me. I trembled with shock, for Dick and others had warned me about the ferocity of the wild boars of the Fly River. They are responsible for many injuries, and even deaths amongst the natives.

I have had enough excitement for one day, and experienced a whole range of emotions, from absolute pleasure, to panic, to downright fear; it is time to start back. A few hours later, after a much-needed bucket-shower, I sit on Dick's verandah, enjoying a long cool gin lime and soda, watching the sun set over the Fly River. The parrots, pigeons and hornbills are flying home to roost, and the time is right to reflect.

I have enjoyed some wonderful days along this river, and today was one of the best. Despite the heat, the mud, and the mosquitos, it is a grand place in which to be, and I fervently hope it will always remain so.

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## NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1990

By Captain N.G.Cheshire, MN.

The volume of reports was about equal with that of last year, with fourteen observers participating, all of whom are thanked for their contributions. The distribution of observations was: North Atlantic 29%, Caribbean 10%, Mediterranean 5%, South Atlantic 7%, North Pacific 18%, South Pacific 5%, South Indian Ocean 8% and North Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf/Red Sea 18%.

### OBSERVERS SENDING NOTES DURING 1990

- Commander M.K.Barritt RN HMS *Hecate*. Devonport-Lome, Mar-Apr'90; Fortaleza, Brazil-Madeira-Plymouth, Oct-Nov'90. (12C)
- MEM(1) A.P.Benson RN HMS *Sheffield*. Baltic, Mar'89; Mediterranean -Gulf of Oman-Persian Gulf - Seychelles - Mombasa - Mediterranean, May-Oct'89. (2C 4R plus supplementary notes and sketches)
- R.M.Curber MV *Alexa*. Felixstowe - Capetown - Port Elizabeth -Durban, Sep'89. (13C)
- First Officer J.G.W.Dixon MV *Remuera Bay*. Tilbury - Capetown - Adelaide, Nov'89; Port Chalmers - Europe via Cape Horn, Dec'89-Jan'90. (12C 5R)
- Radio Officer M.G.Finn MV *Spring Panda*. Costa Rica - Hamburg, 11Dec'89-Jan'90; MV *Dock Express 20*, Singapore -Hazira, India-Singapore-Los Angeles, Feb-Mar'90; W.Coast USA-Panama-Port Everglades-Gibraltar, May-Jun'90; UK - Cristobel Oct'90. (10C).
- Chief Officer B.Grandin MV *Traviata*. Southampton-Italy-Suez-Persian Gulf-Singapore-Hong Kong-Keelung-Japan-Singapore-Suez-Finland, Nov'89-Jan'90. (13C Route Chart 3 Pages Weather Obs.)
- Chief Officer M.C.Littlewood MV *London Spirit*. New York-Curacao and return Philadelphia-Curacao and return, Aug'89; Antwerp-Houston, Oct-Nov'89; multiple voyages U.S.Gulf ports-Curacao, Mexico, Jamaica-E. Coast USA ports, April-June and Aug-Sep'90. (23R 2 Summaries 1 Computer plot)
- Chief Officer A.R.Louch RRS *Charles Darwin* Barry-Azores and return, Apr'90; NE Atlantic-English Channel, Jun'90; North Sea -NE Atlantic, Jul'90; Barry-Tenerife and return, Sep-Oct'90 (11C)
- K. Morgan sailing junk *Cocachin*. Hong Kong-Shanghai and return via inshore Chinese waters, Aug-Nov'90.(11R)
- NA(Metoc) C.Patrick RN HMS *Herald*. Persian Gulf-Gulf of Oman-UK, Sep-Nov'88, and Jan-Mar'90. (4R)
- A.H.Todd RFA *Olna*. Mediterranean-Persian Gulf, Aug-Sep '90.(4R)
- Bernard and Elizabeth Watts SS *Canberra*. NZ-Sydney-Port Moresby-Rabaul-Guam, Feb-Mar'88; Guam-Kobe-Keelung-Hong Kong-Singapore-Colombo-Djibouti-Suez-Majorca-Southampton, Mar-Apr'88.(15C)
- Chief Officer M.G.Weir MV *Canmar Ambassador*. E.Canadian waters, Jun'89; MV *OOCL Freedom* Panama, Red Sea-Gulf of Aden, Mar-Apr'90; Japan-Long Beach, Apr-May'90; MV *OOCL Charger* NW Europe-E.Coast USA and return, Sep '90.(2C 7R)

Cdr. M.E. Winter RN RFA *Diligence*. South Georgia-Falklands Jul'90  
(1R)

Key. R-RNBWS Report Sheets, C-RNBWS Census Sheets, B-RNBWS  
Bird in hand Forms, N-other notes, P-Photographs.

## NOTES ON SPECIES

### ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

**Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans*. Remarkable results tracking the foraging movements of breeding Wandering Albatrosses from Possession I., South Indian Ocean, have been achieved by French scientists, Jouventin and Weimerskirch (1990). Using satellite telemetry they found Wanderers covered between 3600 and 15000 km in a single foraging trip, flying at speeds of up to 80 km/hr and covering distances of up to 900 km/day. They remained active at night and weather systems had a major influence on their movements, ranging from Antarctica to the sub-tropics. On passage from UK to Capetown RMC saw his first at 27.1°S 12.5°E on 16 Sep'89 (sea temp. 15°C). In the South Indian Ocean en route from Capetown to Adelaide during Nov'90, JGWD had singles and low numbers following most days increasing to eight at 40°S 59.2°E on the 25th, and 20 around his drifting ship at 40°S 87.5°E on the 28th. In the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean he saw two at 54.5°S 126.7°W on 1 Jan'90 and thereafter saw small numbers to Cape Horn. Northbound in the western South Atlantic, his last was a single at 27.3°S 42.5°W (sea temp. 26°C).

**Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora*. Reported by JGWD from the NZ sector of the Southern Ocean with two at 47.5°S 177°W on 28 Dec'89, two at 49.3°S 172°W on 29 Dec and four at 51°S 166.5°W later the same day. He also reported one in the western South Atlantic at 39.6°S 49.4°W on 8 Jan'90.

**Black-footed Albatross** *Diomedea nigripes*. Eastbound across the North Pacific during Mar'90, MGF saw the first one at 33.4°N 150.4°E, SE from Japan on the 15th. They were then seen most days until arrival off the west coast USA on 26th with a max. count of nine at 37.6°N 154.2°W on the 22nd. The species was seen by MGF for eight of 13 days during May'90, with a max. of 10 (1 Ad.9 Imm) on 17th whilst his ship was drifting at 39°N 124°W, 15 miles off the USA coast.

**Laysan Albatross** *Diomedea immutabilis*. MGF recorded the first at 33.4°N 150.4°E on 15 Mar'90 when eastbound across the North Pacific, then regularly in small numbers to 36.3°N 131.3°W on 25 Mar'90.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys*. In the South Atlantic RMC saw his first when southbound off Namibia at 21.5°S 07.8°E on 15 Sep'89. NE of the Falklands JGWD counted 37 in 15 min at 50.4°S 56.6°W on 7 Jan'90. There were several reports from the South Indian and Southern Oceans including 10 adults and immatures seen by JGWD at 54.5°S 113.5°W on 2 Jan'90.

**Shy Albatross** *Diomedea cauta*. On passage from Capetown to Adelaide JGWD reported five at 40°S 95.6°E. He also reported several at 54.7°S 63.2°W off Cape Horn on 6 Jan'90.



Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta* off E. coast Tasmania, October 1988.

Photo: Neil Cheshire

**Buller's Albatross** *Diomedea bulleri*. Two reports from the NZ sector of the Southern Ocean by JGWD of single birds at 47.5°S 177°W on 28 Dec'89 and at 51°S 166.5°W the next day.

**Grey-headed Albatross** *Diomedea chrysostoma*. JGWD reported one at 40°S 76°E and 10 adults around his drifting ship at 40°S 87.5°E in the South Indian Ocean on the 27 and 28 Nov'89. He also reported the species from the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean, including seven at 49.3°S 172°W on 29 Dec'89 and eight at 54.5°S 113.5°W on 2 Jan'90.

**Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Diomedea chlororhynchus*. Southbound in the Atlantic, JGWD reported the first at 27.6°S 12.7°E off Namibia on 26 Nov'89 with the species numerous the next day when approaching Capetown. He had five adults around his drifting ship at 40°S 87.5°E on 28 Nov and saw six further east at 40.1°S 105.4°E on 30th.

**Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca*. Single birds were seen by JGWD in the South Indian Ocean at 40°S 53.9°E on 25 Nov'89 and at 40°S 90.5°E on 29 Nov'89.

**Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria palpebrata*. One was reported by JGWD from 39.7°S 45.8°E in the South Indian Ocean.

#### **FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS PROCELLARIIDAE**

**Giant Petrel** *Macronectes* sp. Several reports from JGWD including nine at 47.5°S 177°W SE of New Zealand on 28 Dec'89, 18 at 50.4°S 56.6°W NE of the Falklands and nine nearby at 46.8°S 54°W on 7 Jan'90.

**Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*. MGW saw several flocks, 1000+ in total at 46.6°N 56.1°W south of Newfoundland on 6 Jun'89. In the eastern North Atlantic ARL had 150+ following his ship at 60.3°N 07.5°W south of the Faroes on 11 Jul'90 and 100+ at 64.3°N 12.5°W SE of Iceland on 18 Jul'90. RMC saw four between the Straits of Dover and Dungeness on 3 Sep'89.

**Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialisoides*. JGWD saw nine at 51°S 166.5°W in the NZ sector of the Southern Ocean on 29 Dec'89. (Sea Temp 11.5°C)

**Cape Pigeon (or Pintado Petrel)** *Daption capense*. A few records from JGWD reflecting the summer distribution with one at 40°S 66.6°E in the South Indian Ocean on 26 Nov'89, three at 40°S 74.3°E the next day and one at 40.1°S 105.4°E on Nov'89. Apart from four at 47.5°S 177°E SE from NZ on 28 Dec'89 he did not record them across the Southern Ocean until Cape Horn on the 6 Jan'90 where they were 'numerous'. Northbound in the South Atlantic he saw three at 50.4°S 56.6°W NE of the Falklands and four later at 46.8°S 54°W on 7 Jan'90.

**Blue Petrel** *Halobaena caerulea*. On passage from Capetown to Adelaide JGWD saw one at 40°S 74.3°E on 27 Nov'89, had five around his drifting ship at 40°S 87.5°E the next day and saw five at 40°S 90°E on 29 Nov'89. In the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean he counted 24 in ten minutes at 54.5°S 140.6°W on 31 Dec'89 (sea temp 9°C). He also saw them off Cape Horn on 6 Jan'90.

**Antarctic Petrel** *Thalassoica antarctica*. One was recorded by MEW midway between South Georgia and the Falklands at 52.6°S 48.2°W on 7 Jul'90. (sea temp 6°C)

**Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera*. In the SW Indian Ocean there were two reports from JGWD who saw three birds at 36.1°S 23.6°E and one at 39.7°S 45.8°E on the 22nd and 24 Nov'89. He also reported a single bird from well south in the Southern Ocean at 51°S 166.5°W on 29 Dec'89. (sea temp 11.5°C)

**White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessoni*. SW of Australia, JGWD counted eight in 20 minutes at 39.5°S 114.5°E on 1 Dec'89. He also had a series of records between NZ and Cape Horn with six at 54.1°S 147.5°W and five at 54.5°S 140.6°W on 31 Dec'89, 40 counted in 20 min at 54.5°S 126.7°W on 1 Jan'90 and six at 54.5°S 113.5°W the next day. And in the following month 1000 were reported by S. Madge (1991) in the Drake Strait.



Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera gouldi* S. Tasman Sea  
August 1989.

Photo: Neil Cheshire

**Atlantic Petrel** *Pterodroma incerta*. JGWD reported three at 38.2°S 33.3°E and one at 39°S 38.5°E on 23 Nov '89. Northbound in the South Atlantic he saw three at 39.6°S 49.4°W on 8 Jan 90, another three the next day at 32.6°S 45.8°W and one SE from Rio at 25.5°S 41.5°W on 10 Jan '90.

**Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis*. In the SE Atlantic RMC described single birds, with a total of 11 for the day, seen at c.16.1°S 03.3°E on 14 Sep '89. JGWD counted 200 in 30 min at 46.8°S 54°W NE of the Falklands on 7 Jan '90. On passage from Capetown to Adelaide JGWD reported three at 38.7°S 35.7°E on 23 Nov '89, one at 39.7°S 45.8°E the next day with five at 40° 53.9°E and four at 40°S 59.2°E on 25 Nov '89. Numbers increased to c.100 around his drifting ship at 4°S 87.5°E, about 500 miles SE of St. Paul Is. on 28 Nov '89.

**Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta*. MGW described a probable pale morph bird seen at 40°N 163.5°W in the central North Pacific on 1 May '90. The identification of dark *Pterodroma* petrels, including *neglecta*, in the North Pacific and their occurrence off the west coast of USA has recently been discussed by Bailey et al (1989) who supply a good series of comparative illustrations and photographs.

**Black-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma nigripennis*. There is a tentative sighting by JGWD of four 'cookilaria'-type petrels that had a distinct black leading edge to the white underwing, from 51°S 166.5°W, well SE from New Zealand on 29 Dec '89. The nearest breeding colony is on South East Island in the Chatham Group at 44°S 176°W.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii*. RMC described three birds of the North Atlantic population seen at 34.4°N 12.9°W NE of Madeira on 6 Sep '89. Further south, MKB had two 'probables' at 04°N 08°W near Liberia on 1 Apr '90 and saw single birds in the central tropical Atlantic at 06.1°N 31.8°W on 24 Oct '90, at 09.8°N 29.1°W on the 25th and at 13.1°N 27.4°W on 26 Oct '90. Near the south China coast, KM reported single birds at 23.3°N 117.2°E on 6 Aug '90, at 26.1°N 120°E on 23 Aug and at 26.6°N 120.1°E on 28 Aug '90.

**Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax*. There were several records from the normal range around Arabia including 15 mostly solitary birds seen by CP at 20°N 58.8°E on 26 Feb '89, and 50 in groups of four to five at 16.6°N 54.8°E off southern Oman the next day. APB provided detailed and interesting field notes on birds seen during June in the Arabian Sea. He found the 'stepped' tail mentioned by Harrison (1987) was not a good field mark, being seen only at close range and then in only a small proportion of birds. It has been suggested elsewhere the feature may be due to moult.

**Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea*. Reported by JGWD from the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean with two at 54.5°S 126.7°W on 1 Jan '90 and one the next day at 54.5°S 113.5°W.

**White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Southbound towards Capetown, RMC saw the first at 27.1°S 12.5°E on 16 Sep '89, and on a similar voyage JGWD saw his first at 20°S 06.8°E on 19 Nov '89. From Capetown towards Adelaide along 40°S latitude, JGWD found

them numerous as far as SW Australia with a count of 30 at 69.4°E SW of Amsterdam Is. on 26 Nov'89, 50+ around his drifting ship at 87.5°E, on 28th and a count of 20 at 95.6°E the following day. He found them less evident between NZ and Cape Horn with a maximum count of eight at 52.2°S 160°W on 30 Dec'89.

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*. Wintering birds were recorded by BG who saw three at 18.8°N 120.3°E off Luzon on 1 Jan'90, 18 the next day at 13.4°N 115°E, and one at 10.7°N 112.4°E in the South China Sea on 3 Jan'90. BEW recorded c. 1000 from the important wintering area north of PNG at 00.1°S 149°E on 3 Mar'88. The following night BEW identified 25 in the lights of SS *Canberra*, keeping pace with the ship steaming north at 21 knots. They also recorded 10 at 28.4°N 126.6°E north of Okinawa on 10 Mar'88. MGW saw 'uncountable numbers as far as the eye could see' when passing through the Izu Group, one of the species' main breeding islands off Japan at 34.2°N 139.5°E on 24 Apr'90.

**Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*. Many records from the North Atlantic and western Mediterranean from several observers. MKB recorded feeding flocks up to 100+ at 17.4°N 25.3°W near Nola Seamount, off the Cape Verdes on 27 Oct'90, of which some were taking flying-fish in flight. Elsewhere in the tropical Atlantic, MKB saw 26 at 13.1°N 17.6°W off Guinea on 29 Mar'90, and 40 at 04.3°N 02°W near Ghana on 2 Apr'90. MCL saw 38 at 40.5°N 40.2°W in mid Atlantic on 30 Oct'89 and noted moulting inner primaries on birds seen closely. In the South Atlantic JGWD saw 10 at 11°S 35.3°W off Brazil on 12 Jan'90, and nine at 03.1°S 07.1°W in the Gulf of Guinea on 16 Nov'89.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*. Four were seen by BEW at 34°S 159.9°E in mid Tasman Sea on 23 Feb'88. In the winter quarters, APB counted 70 at c. 24.5°N 58°E in the Gulf of Oman on 30 Jul'89, and five at 18.5°N 57.3°E in the Arabian Sea on 1 Sep'89.

**Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis*. There were many records from the normal Atlantic range. In the South Atlantic JGWD saw four at 36°S 47.3°W on 9 Jan'90, and 200 later the same day at 32.6°S 45.8°W off southern Brazil. South of Newfoundland, MGW saw 2500-3000 in large feeding flocks with other species at 46.6°N 56.1°W on 6 Jun'90, and 120+ flying south at 49°N 15.2°W in the eastern Atlantic on 19 Sep'90. MCL recorded 50 at 38.4°N 72.9°W off the USA coast on 17 Aug'90.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus*. There were scattered reports from mainly tropical and sub-tropical oceans. Of note were six reported by MGW off southern Japan at 34.8°N 140.4°E on 25 Apr'90. Further west, close to the Chinese coast, KM reported pale-phase birds as follows: two at 24.6°N 118.7°E on 10 Aug'90, 100+ at 23.3°N 116.7°E on 6 Nov'90 and 50 at 23.3°N 114.3°E on 10 Nov'90. He also reported seven dark-phase birds at 26.1°N 120°E, on 23 Aug'90, which is unusual for the area, and confusion with other species is possible. BEW saw a large feeding flock in 'One and a Half Mile Opening', a passage through the Great Barrier Reef into the Coral Sea at 14.4°S 145.5°E on 28 Feb'88. BG saw five at 13.4°N 45.2°E in the Gulf of Aden on 17 Nov'89, and 50 at 18.2°N 57.4°E in the Arabian Sea on 19 Nov'89.

**Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri*. BEW recorded 80 at 34.3°S 171.1°E off northern New Zealand on 22 Feb'88, and had one aboard the next day in the central Tasman at 34°S 159.9°E.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*. South of Newfoundland at 46.6°N 56.1°W, MGW counted 75 among large feeding flocks of Great Shearwaters and Fulmars on 6 Jun'89. ARL had a northerly record of two at 60.3°N 07.5°W, south of the Faroes, on 11 Jul'90. In the North Pacific, MGW saw 6 at 38.4°N 140.4°E off southern Japan on 25 Apr'90 and a flock of 100 overtook his vessel at 35.4°N 144.5°E the next day. In the South Atlantic, RMC saw six at 27.1°S 12.5°E off Namibia on 16 Sep'89. JGWD saw 300 in two flocks at 54.5°S 113.5°W in the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean on 2 Jan '90, and reported them as numerous off Cape Horn on 6 Jan'90. The following day he saw 17 at 50.4°S 56.6°W NE from the Falklands.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris*. JGWD counted 50 in 15 minutes at 39°S 119.3°E off SW Australia on 2 Dec'89. Near the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon at 22.3°S 151°E BEW saw 'thousands' in flight and resting on the sea on 27 Mar'88. This is well north of the species' usual distribution off eastern Australia.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*. MGW reported 38 'Audubon's' at 46.6°N 56.1°W south of Newfoundland, among large feeding flocks of other species on 6 Jun'89, (sea temp 5.8°C). It is most likely there was confusion with Manx Shearwater which is now known to breed and visit in some hundreds nearby on Middle Lawn Island, Newfoundland, 46.9°N 55.6°W - Storey and Lien (1985). RMC described one from 27.1°S 12.5°E off SW Africa on 16 Sep'89. JGWD reported 20 at 09.4°N 16.3°W off West Africa on 14 Nov'89.

**Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan*. Bourne *et al* (1988) suggested the Mediterranean representatives of the Manx Shearwater, the 'Levantine' and 'Balearic' Shearwaters form a distinct species; the Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* with the 'Levantine' being the nominate race *P.y.yelkouan* and the 'Balearic' birds a distinct race *P.y.mauretanicus*. P. Yesou *et al* (1990) have published an excellent series of flight photographs and discuss plumage variation and identification. BG reported one *mauretanicus* at 39.5°N 09.7°W off Portugal on 21 Jan'90. BEW reported five more at 39.2°N 09.9°E in the western Med on 10 Apr'88. Further east, CP described three *yelkouan* seen at 37.7°N 16°E east of Sicily on 19 Mar'89, and APB saw two nearby in the Straits of Messina on 27 Oct'89.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis*. A single bird and a flock of eight were tentatively identified by ARL from 36.5°N 24.7°W, ESE from the Azores, on 15 Apr'90. Further south, one was reported by RMC at 20.3°N 17.8°W off Mauritania on 8 Sep'89, and MKB had a possible bird at 17.5°N 25.2°W near the Cape Verdes on 27 Oct'90. In Australian waters, BEW reported one at 22.3°S 151.3°E at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef on 27 Feb'88. Across the Tasman in the Kermadec Group, Tennyson and Taylor (1990) report 100,000 pairs breeding on Curtis Island, making this one of the largest colonies in the world.

**Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus l'herminieri*. There were two reports of single birds from the southern Red Sea, one by BEW at 15.9°N 41.5°E on 3 Apr'88, the other by BG at 13.4°N 45.2°E on 17 Nov'89. CP described one seen at 16.6°N 54.8°E off Oman on 27 Feb'89 and six were seen by APB at 23.9°N 58.9°E near Muscat on 22 Jun'89.

#### **STORM-PETRELS HYDROBATIDAE**

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanicus oceanites*. Summer records from the North Atlantic include seven seen wake-following by RMC at 27.3°N 15.5°W near the Canaries on 7 Sep'89, and 50 seen the next day at 20.3°N 17.8°W off Mauritania. There are several records from the Arabian Sea, with a maximum of 100 seen by APB at 18.5°N 57.3°E on 1 Sep'89. In the South Indian Ocean, JGWD had 30 around his drifting ship at 40°S 87.5°E on 28 Nov'89, and saw 18 the next day at 40°S 90.5°E.

**White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina*. Five probables were reported by MKB at 29.8°N 15.7°W near the Salvages on 25 Mar'90. ARL described one seen at 45.7°N 20.2°W, north of the usual Atlantic range on 22 Sep'90. In the South Indian Ocean, JGWD reported two at 40°S 74.3°E on 27 Nov'89 and two more at 40°S 79°E later the same day.

**Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregatta tropica*. APB gave a detailed description of two seen at 17.7°N 57.5°E, 100nm off Ras Mandraka in the northern Arabian Sea on 17 Jun'89. Two *fregatta*-type Storm-petrels were reported by JGWD from 38.7°S 35.7°E and 39.7°S 45.8°E, in the south Indian Ocean, on 23 and 24 Nov '89. He also reported two Black-bellied at 47°S 177°W SE from New Zealand on 28 Dec'89, and one NE of the Falklands at 50.4°S 56.6°W on 7 Jan'90.

**Grey-backed Storm-petrel** *Garrodia nereis*. Reported off Cape Horn by JGWD on 6 Jan'90. He also saw six the next day at 50.4°N 56.5°W, NE of the Falklands.

**British Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*. Few reports are received of this species, particularly from the Mediterranean. In the Western Approaches, ARL saw 15 at 49.3°N 15.8°W on 8 Jun 90, 17 at 48.5°N 07.5°W on 23 Jun, and one at 46.8°N 08.3°W on 28 Oct'90. MKB saw 10 at 25.4°N 16.3°W off southern Morocco on 26 Mar'90.

**Madeiran Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma castro*. There were several records this year from the tropical and sub-tropical Atlantic. One tentatively identified by MCL at 40.8°N 34.3°W, WNW of the Azores, on 29 Oct'89 was described as having a 'straight white band on the rump, square or shallow forked tail and no wing bar'. MKB supplied a series of records around West Africa between the Salvage Is. and Ghana during March and April 1990. These included two at 29.9°N 15.6°W on 25 Mar, four at 25.4°N 16.3°W off southern Morocco the next day, 12 at 16.5°N 17.5°W near Senegal on 28 Mar, seven at 11.1°N 17.4°W off Guinea on the 29th, of which three untypically followed in the ship's wake; and 11 later the same day at 10.7°N 17.3°W, one at 05.5°N 10.8°W near Liberia on the 31st, two at 04.1°N 06.3°W off the Ivory Coast on 1 Apr and two at 04.5°N 01.5°W in Ghanaian waters the next

day. Later in the year, whilst on passage from Brazil to Madeira, MKB saw the first at 09°N 29.7°W on 25 Oct'90, saw two the next day at 13.1°N 27.4°W, and saw two at 17.2°N 25.2°W on the 27th. After leaving Madeira he saw a single birds at 36.9°N 14°W on 4 Nov'90. In the south tropical Atlantic, RMC described 10 seen at 04.6°S 05.6°W on 12 Sep'89.

**Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. ARL had several summer records from the eastern North Atlantic, including two at 60.3°N 07.5°W south of the Faroes on 11 Jul'90. MKB described two seen at 28.9°N 18.1°W west, from the Canary Is. on 30 Oct'90.

**Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis*. A record of one by APB at 22.9°N 60.4°E, about 30nm off Ras al Hadd in the northern Arabian Sea on 15 Jun'89, in company with Wilson's Storm-petrels, was supported by a full description and sketch. He described the bird as about a third larger than Wilson's, similar to Leach's, in size and shape with dark plumage. Overall colour was dark brownish contrasting with the blacker plumage of Wilson's. Pale upperwing-coverts formed a distinct wingbar, noted to be about as prominent as that of Wilson's. Flight was low fast and direct with no glides and regular wingbeats. Inshore in Chinese waters, KM reported one at 24.6°N 118.6°E on 10 Aug'90, three the following day at 26.1°N 119.6°E, and one at 26.1°N 120°E on 23 Aug'90. We include a separate note about recent records in the North Atlantic. (See page 63.)

**Matsudaira's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma matsudairae*. In the North Pacific, MGF described nine that followed his ship at 25.7°N 133.6°E, west of the breeding islands in the Bonin Group. He was able to see the white area on the wing, formed by the exposed bases of the primary shafts.

#### DIVING-PETRELS PELECANOIDIDAE

**Diving-petrel Sp.** *Pelecanoides*. Two were seen by JGWD at 37.3°S 28.4°E, in the SW Indian Ocean, on the 22 Nov'89, and another nine at 54.5°S 140.6°W, in the Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean on 31 Dec'89.

#### TROPICBIRDS PHAETHONTIDAE

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus*. In the Caribbean area, MCL saw several off Venezuela with one at 11.9°N 62.7°W and three at 11.2°N 62.2°W on the 24 May '90, two at 11.8°N 63.5°W and one nearby at 12°N 64.3°W on 28 May'90. Further to the west, he saw one near the north coast of Colombia at 11.3°N 76.3°W on 10 Jun'90. In the tropical Atlantic, MKB saw one just west of the Cape Verdes at 17.2°N 25.6°W on 27 Oct'90. In the Arabian Sea area, BG saw an adult at 10.4°N 59.2°E on 11 Jan'90 and another at 12.6°N 43.5°W in the Straits of Bab el Mandeb on 13 Jan'90. BEW recorded one at 10.2°N 59.2°E on 31 Mar 88, and in the southern Red Sea had a close view of one at 15.9°N 41.5°E on 3 Apr'88. It was seen to plunge into the sea, then remain on the surface, eating its prey with wings partly open and the tail waving high above and over the body. APB recorded four in the vicinity for several hours at 18.5°N 57.3°E on 1 Sep'89 and five,

including three immatures, around the ship most of the day at 14°N 52°E in the Gulf of Aden on 15 Oct'89. AHT saw one at c.25°N 54°E in the southern Persian Gulf on 12 Oct'90.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*. Two days after the passage of hurricane 'Gustave', MGW saw one well north in the western North Atlantic at 39.2°N 57.3°W on 5 Sep'90. BG described one from 20.5°N 64.5°E in the central Arabian Sea on 28 Nov'89.

#### **PELICANS PELICANIDAE**

**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens*. One in Djibouti Harbour on 2 Apr'88 (BEW).

#### **GANNETS and BOOBIES SULIDAE**

**Northern Gannet** *Sula bassana*. BG saw 75 adults and immatures feeding at 38.4°N 09.7°W, off southern Portugal on Nov'89, and in the same area on 21 Jan'90 he counted 1175 in several large feeding flocks. On 26 and 27 Mar'90 MKB had several records, mostly of juveniles between 25.5°N 16.2°W and 20.6°N 17.7°W in the upwelling area off southern Morocco, with a max. of six at the last position. Observers may care to take a second look at Gannets seen off Europe and NW Africa, as Patterson and Riddiford (1990) have now drawn attention to what may be either Northern Gannets with unusual plumage or Cape Gannets *Sula capensis* occurring in European waters.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*. There were a number of records from MCL from the normal Caribbean range. Larger concentrations included 15 at 13.4°N 69°W north of Curacao on 9 May'90, 40 at 13.3°N 69.2°W on 9 Aug'89 and 35 in a mixed flock with Sooty Terns at 12.5°N 63.1°W on 3 Sep'90. In the tropical Atlantic, JGWD reported them numerous near Fernando de Noronha at 05.4°S 32.2°W on 13 Jan'90. In the Arabian Sea, CP saw a total of 10 in small groups at 20°N 58.8°E off Oman on 26 Feb'89, and the next day had a total of 40, all adults, in groups at 16.6°N 54.8°E. APB saw 14 in small groups at 17.7°N 57.5°E on 14 Jun'89.

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*. MGW had two roosting aboard his ship at 12.8°N 91.8°W in the eastern tropical Pacific on 9 May'90. MCL reported several from the Caribbean area, including three adults and five immatures at 12.5° 65.3°W on 8 Aug'90, and five immatures plunge diving and catching flying-fish on the wing at 12.8°N 62.4°W, NW from Granada on 13 Aug'90. The species was reported numerous by JGWD when passing by Fernando de Noronha at 05.4°S 33.2°W on 13 Jan'90. In the southern Red Sea, BG reported a possible adult white phase (but with no description given) at 15.5°N 41.7°E on 13 Jan'90. APB had four aboard his ship at 04°S 44.7°E, 300 miles east of Mombasa on 12 Aug'90.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*. In the eastern Pacific, MGF saw one at 17.4°N 101.7°W off Mexico on 30 May'90, and two at 07.4°N 81.8°W near Panama on 3 Jun'90. MCL had an adult and an immature roosting aboard at 16.9°N 68.3°W in the eastern Caribbean on 10 May'90. Larger concentrations were seen in the vicinity of Red Sea islands, with 50 recorded by BG at 15.5°N 41.7°E near Centre Peak

Island on 13 Jan '90. MGW counted 53 south of Jabal Atair on 4 Apr '90, and ten were seen by BEW at 15.9°N 41.5°E on 3 Apr '88. These included a bird with the pale bill, white head and dark brown upperparts - supposedly characteristic of the eastern Pacific race *Sula brewsteri*.

#### **CORMORANTS PHALACROCORACIDAE**

**Socotra Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*. In the Persian Gulf, six were seen off Dubai on 26 Jun '89 by APB, and 270 Counted by CP in the same area on 20 Nov '88.

#### **FRIGATEBIRDS FREGATIDAE**

**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*. Reported from the Caribbean area by MCL, who saw one at 18.2°N 68°W in Mona Passage on 28 Aug '89. He saw single birds off Venezuela at 11.7°N 63.2°W on 28 May, with another at 12.1°N 64.5°W later the same day and at 11.2°N 62.5°W on 9 Aug '90. He also had one that kept station over his ship for 30 minutes at 24.3°N 81.7°W near Key West on 6 Nov '89.

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*. An interesting northerly record in the Pacific from MGW, who had one roosting overnight at 40°N 158.3°W on 1 May '90. A single was reported at 16.1°S 145.5°E near the Great Barrier Reef by BEW on 28 Feb '88.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*. One was seen at 00.1°S 149°E north of Papua New Guinea on the 3 Mar '88 by BEW.

#### **PHALAROPES PHALAROPODIDAE**

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Most reports were from the Arabian Sea area. CP reported 60 at 24.8°N 57.1°E in the Gulf of Oman on 18 Jan '89. Further south, he saw a considerable movement of birds with c.2000 in flocks of five to forty moving SW at 20°N 58.8°E on 26 Feb '89, and another 150 in small flocks also moving SW were seen the next day at 16.6°N 54.8°E. APB saw 22 winter or immature plumaged birds in small flocks at 13.2°N 49.8°E in the Gulf of Aden on 31 Aug '89, and a feeding flock of 25 the next day at 18.5°N 57.3°E. BG reported 60 at 13.4°N 45.2°E in the Gulf of Aden on 17 Nov '89, and 130 phalarope sp. sitting on the water at 24.9°N 58.2°E on 27 Nov '89. KM reported four from inshore Chinese waters at 26.3°N 119.9°E, in the wake of a typhoon on 9 Sep '90.

**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*. A single bird was tentatively identified by MKB at 05.5°N 10.8°W off Liberia on 31 Mar '90. It had very pale upperparts with grey brown flecking, a distinct wingbar and gave a 'kwee-kwee' call. He also saw three probables the following day at 04.1°N 07.1°W, south of the Ivory Coast.

#### **SKUAS AND JAEGERS STERCORARIIDAE**

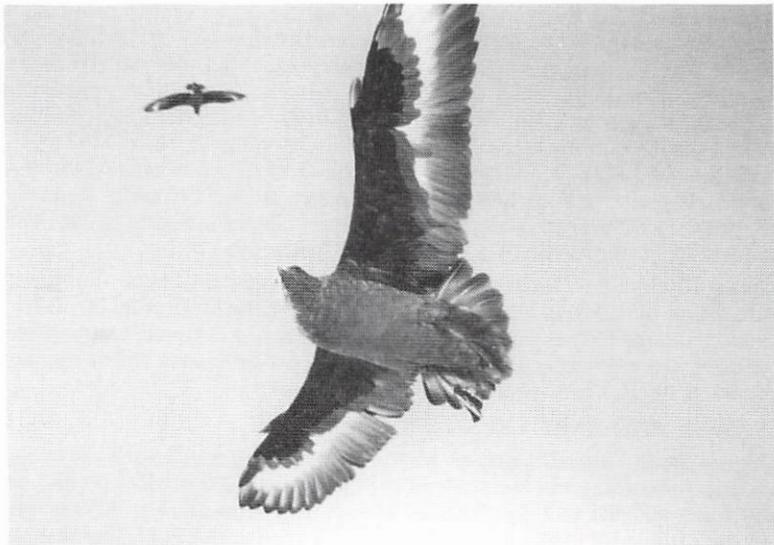
**Great Skua** *Catharacta skua*. Many records from north-west European waters, including two seen at 39.5°N 09.8°W off Portugal by BG on 2 Jan '90, one seen by MKB at 39.3°N 13°W on 23 Mar '90 and four in the Straits of Gibraltar seen by BEW on 12 Apr '88. ARL had several records in the Western Approaches between May and September, and further north saw two south of Iceland at 62.5°N 16.8°W on 14 Jul '90

and three SE of Iceland at 64.3°N 12.5°W on 18 Jul'90. RMC saw one between Dover and Dungeness on 3 Sep'89, and another at 20.4°N 17.8°W near Mauritania on 8 Sep'89.

**Antarctic, (Southern or Brown) Skua** *Catharacta (s) antarctica*. AHT saw a large dark skua with a very pale nape in the southern Persian Gulf, c.25°N 54°E, on 20 Sep'90 which may have been this species or a South Polar Skua. In the same area, CP reported a 'Great Skua' at 24.1°N 55.2°E on 22 Nov'88. In South African waters, RMC saw two at 32.6°S 17.1°E on 17 Sep'89, and JGWD saw three at 33.5°S 17.9°E on 21 Nov'89.

**South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki*. A bird seen by BEW at 26.1°S 153.6°E off southern Queensland on 26 Feb'89, described as 'a small bonxie' with wing flashes apparent on the underwing only, a pale collar, uniform dark brown plumage and a shortish dark bill is most likely to have been this species.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*. In the eastern Atlantic, MKB saw several 'probables' between 22°N 17.3°W and 21°N 17.6°W on 27 Mar'90. Later the same day he counted 99 birds tentatively identified as Pomarine at 20.3°N 17.7°W off Mauritania, over an area of upwelling where there was fishing boat activity. He also saw two at 08.4°N 15°W off Sierra Leone on 30 Mar'90, one at 06°N 11.5°W, two at 05.5°N 10.8°W and two at 04°N 07.1°W off Liberia/Ivory Coast on 31 Mar'90. RMC saw two at 20.3°N 17.8°W on 8 Sep'89 and one at 21.5°S 07.8°E off Namibia on 15 Sep'89. ARL reported one off Morocco at 24.5°N



Antarctic Skuas, South of Cape Aghulas, 30 July 1990,  
M.V. *Canterbury Star* Photo: Captain Johnson, MN

19.9°W on 7 Oct'90 and another at 24.6°N 20.4°W on 9 Oct'90. In the Middle East, BEW recorded three over the Little Bitter Lake, Suez Canal, on 6 Apr '88. APB observed one attacking a Bridled Tern at 23.9°N 58.9°E in the Gulf of Oman on 22 Jun'89, rather an unusual date. There were several autumn records from the same area; AHT had four sightings between the 10 Sep-13 Oct'90 at c.25°N 54°E, in the southern Persian Gulf, with a max of six birds on the 18 Sep. CP reported one off Dubai at 24.2°N 55.1°E on 29 Sep'88 and another in this area on 19 Nov'88. BG recorded 30 in 34 miles at 12.1°N 44.6°E in the Gulf of Aden on 17 Nov'89. BEW recorded two at 26.1°S 153.6°E off eastern Australia on 26 Feb'88. In the central North Pacific MGW had one at 40°N 163.6°W on 1 May'90.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*. Six probables were reported by MKB from an area of upwelling at 20.3°N 17.7°W, off Mauritania, on 27 Mar'90. ARL reported one at 33.8°N 21.1°W, well west of Madeira, on 15 Apr'90 and five at 45.7°N 20.2°W on 22 Sep'90. During Sep'89 RMC reported two at 27.3°N 15.5°W in the Canary Is. area on 7th, four at 06.8°N 14.4°W off Sierra Leone on the 10th, 11 at 21.5°S 07.8°E off Namibia on the 15th and one near Durban at 29.8°S 31°E on the 20th. Near the SW coast of India, at 10.7°N 75.6°E, MGF tentatively identified 20 in small groups on the 27 Feb'90. AHT reported one at 25°N 54°E in the southern Persian Gulf on 8 Oct'90. BG reported two at 25°N 57.7°E in the Gulf of Oman on 20 Nov'89 and one in the Formosa Straits at 24°N 118.5E on 10 Dec'89.

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*. This species is difficult to separate from Arctic when moulting at its winter quarters, and is probably under-reported. MGW recorded one in mid-Atlantic at 48.3°N 32.7°W on 12 Aug'90, and further east ARL had two probables at 45.7°N 20.2°W on 22 Sep'90.

#### GULLS LARIDAE

**White-eyed Gull** *Larus leucophthalmus*. CP had six around his ship anchored at 28.2°N 33.3°E in the Gulf of Suez on 8 Mar'89, and to the south APB saw two at 26°N 34°E on 6 Jun'89.

**Sooty (or Aden) Gull** *Larus hemprichi*. BG recorded two at 12°N 51.4°E in the Gulf of Aden on 12 Jan'90, and APB saw four at 23.9°N 58.9°E off Muscat on 22 Jun'89.

**Japanese Gull** *Larus crassirostris*. Many were seen by KM in inshore waters between Hong Kong and Shanghai from Aug to Nov'90.

**Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii*. BEW saw three at 39.2°N 09.9°E off Sardinia on 10 Apr'88, and recorded 11 in Palma Harbour the following day.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*. There are many records from around the northern hemisphere. BEW saw a considerable northward movement in the Suez Canal, and recorded 100+ in the Little Bitter Lake on 6 Apr '88. MGF saw eight adults off Hazira, India, at 21°N 72.6°E on 21 Feb'90. KM had several autumn records from the Chinese coast, with one at 30.8°N 121.8°E on 27 Sep, two at 23.3°N 116.7°E on 6 Nov, and 20+ at 23.3°N 116.7°E on 7/8 Nov'90.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*. In the southern Red Sea, BG recorded five adults at 15.5°N 41.7°E on 13 Jan'90, one the next day at 22°N 37.8°E and 20 in Suez Bay on 15 Jan'90. BEW saw one in Djibouti Harbour on 2 Apr'88, and noticed a strong northward movement along the Suez Canal, with 200+ seen in the Little Bitter Lake on 6 Apr'88. AHT recorded small numbers most days from 10 Sep-13 Oct'90 at c. 25°N 54°E, in the southern Persian Gulf.

**California Gull** *Larus californicus*. MGF recorded two offshore at 39°N 124°W on 9 May'90, and another in the same place on 13 May.

**Western Gull** *Larus occidentalis*. Three were seen by MGF at 29°N 116.3°W, off Baja California on 27 May'90.

**Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus*. KM reported this species from inshore Chinese waters, near the southern limit of its range, with three at 29.8°N 122°E on 23 Sep'90, 30+ at 30°N 122.2°E the next day, two at 30.4°N 122.3°E, on 26 Sep and three at 30.8°N 121.8°E on 27 Sep.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*. MGW described eight seen at 46.6°N 56.1°W, south of Newfoundland on 6 Jun'89.

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*. CP reported one at 26.3°N 50.8°E, in the Persian Gulf, on 23 Jan'89, and another in the same position on 27th Jan behaving aggressively toward two Socotra Cormorants.

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*. There are continuing records of this species from well offshore. MCL saw four immatures at 33.1°N 73.8°W, 160 miles, SE from N.Carolina on 4 Nov'89, single immatures at 26.2°N 84.7°W, 210 miles SE of the Mississippi Delta on 1 Jun'90, and at 25.5°N 87.5°W 54 miles SE of Mobile the next day.

**Brown-headed (or Indian Black-headed) Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus*. Following the Editor's remarks in SS 39 on how few reports of this species we have received in past years, several were in fact in the pipeline. CP described an immature bird, seen at Jebel Ali in the UAE on 16 Feb'89, and MGF reported one at 16.3°N 73.2°E off the east coast of India on 26 Feb'90. BEW saw 12 in Madras Harbour on 26 Mar'89 and 20 at Colombo on 28 Mar. There was an interesting record by KM from the eastern limit of the range. He described 300+ mostly first winter birds seen at 31.3°N 121.5°E at the mouth of the Huango River, lower Yangtze, on 29 Sep'90. We include a separate note on the possibility of confusion with Relict Gulls *L. relictus* in this area. (See page 67.)

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*. APB reported a vagrant in full breeding plumage, following his ship in company with Common and Black-headed Gulls at c.54.5°N 19°E, in Gdansk Bay, on 21 Mar'89. He also saw two winter-plumaged birds in the Straits of Messina on 27 Oct'89, and CP reported 42 adults at 37.7°N 16°E, near the east coast of Sicily, on 19 Mar'89.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*. A probable first winter bird was seen by MKB at 05.5°N 00.6°E, off Ghana, on 3 Apr'90. BEW saw one in Djibouti Harbour on 2 Apr'88. In the Persian Gulf, BG saw two at 26.8°N 51.7°E on 26 Nov'89, and 10 at 25.4°N 54.6°E later the

same day. In Chinese coastal waters, KM found it absent during Aug/Sep'90. He saw 40 at 24.9°N 118.7°E on 27 Oct, 100+ in Xiamen Harbour from 31 Oct-4 Nov and 300+ in Hong Kong Harbour and approaches, on 12 Nov'90.

**Chinese Black-headed Gull** *Larus saundersi*. None were identified by KM during 79 days of observations in inshore Chinese waters, between Hong Kong and Shanghai from 2 Aug to 12 Nov'90.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*. MGF saw six off Hazira, India, 21°N 72.6°E on 21 Feb'90. BEW saw two displaying in the Little Bitter Lake, Suez Canal, on 6 Apr'88, and APB saw five at Port Said anchorage on 4 Jun'89.

**Little Gull** *Larus minutus*. CP reported 30 at 37.7°N 16°E, east of Sicily on 19 Mar'89.

**Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini*. One was seen by RMC at 41.4°N 10.2°W, off Portugal, on 5 Sep'89; he saw another when approaching Capetown on 17 Sep'89, and one at 33.9°S 25.9°E near Port Elizabeth on 19 Sep'89.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*. South of Newfoundland, at 46.6°N 56.1°W, MGW saw 250+, mostly immatures on 6 Jun'89.

#### TERNs STERNIDAE

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias nigra*. In the wintering area off West Africa, MKB saw one at 13.1°N 17.6°W, and another at 11.9°N 17.5°W on 29 Mar'90; both were in breeding plumage. RMC saw three at 20.3°N 17.8°W, offshore from Mauritania on 8 Sep'89.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica*. AHT had six sightings between 10 Sep and 13 Oct'90 in the southern Persian Gulf, c.25°N 54°E. There were several reports by KM from Chinese coastal waters, between 26°N and 28°N from 11 Aug to 18 Sep'90, with a maximum of 35+ off the Min River, 26°N 119.5°E, on 22 Aug.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*. CP saw one 10 miles off Abu Dhabi UAE on 30 Sep 88. In Chinese waters, KM saw two at 26.1°N 120.1°E on 23 Aug'90, two at 23.3°N 116.7°E on 6 Nov and 12 at 22.7°N 116.3°E on 9 Nov.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*. BEW reported 15 at Suez heading north on 6 Apr'88. AHT reports a feeding flock of 50+ at c.25°N 54°E in the southern Persian Gulf on 11 Oct'90, (but winter White-cheeked Terns seem more likely here) and several sightings in the area between 10 Sep and 13 Oct. KM reported small numbers in Chinese waters between the Min River and 27.6°N 121.1°E, where he saw a SW movement of small groups on 13/14 Sep.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisea*. RMC reported two at 20.3°N 17.8°W, off Mauritania on 8 Sep'89. JGWD had an unusual tern aboard he thought might have been a White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata*, whilst drifting at 40°S 87.5°E in the South Indian Ocean on 28 Nov'89. His detailed description and sketch also seems compatible with an immature Arctic Tern, which seems more likely here.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*. MKB had a 'probable' at 09°N 15.7°W, off West Africa on 30 Mar'90. BEW saw 20+ fishing in their ship's wake leaving Port Kelang, Malaysia, on 23 Mar'88. KM reported one at 22.5°N 114.4°E, SE from Hong Kong on 2 Aug'90.

**White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*. CP reported 10 from c.24°N 59°W, southern Gulf of Oman on 26 Sep'88.

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana*. Many were seen by KM in inshore Chinese waters, with the limits being one at 22.5°N 114.4°E SE from Hong Kong on 2 Aug'90, and the most northerly at 28.1°N 121.3°E on 19 Sep. Observations included 40+ at 23.3°N 117.2°E on 6 Aug, and 20 at 26.8°N 120.4°E on 13 Sep.

**Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus*. MKB saw one at 20.3°N 17.7°W off Mauritania on 27 Mar'90, and 100 at 15.4°N 17.7°W off Senegal the next day. APB counted 40, in groups, at 23.9°N 58.9°E near Muscat on 22 Jun'89, and c.60 feeding over Tuna? shoals off Dubai on 26 Jun'89. KM found the species widespread in Chinese waters, between Hong Kong and 28°N 121.2°E. His observations included 120+ around a breeding colony on an islet at 27.6°N 121°E on 13 Sep, and 300+ at 27.8°N 121.2°E on 17 Sep.

**Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata*. Scattered records from the 2 tropical oceans of the world. Records included 24 seen by BG at 09.5°N 64°E, in the central Indian Ocean on 10 Jan'90. APB saw 30 flying ahead of a storm at 02.7°S 57.7°E on 6 Aug'89. MCL had five at 28.9°N 78.4°W, 115 miles east of C. Canaveral, Florida, on 21 Aug'90.

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons*. BEW saw 12 in the southern Suez Canal on 6 Apr'88, and APB saw six at Port Said anchorage on 4 Jun'89.

**Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii*. Off South Africa, RMC saw nine at 34.9°S 19.6°E on 18 Sep'89, and three near Durban on 20 Sep'89. KM had several flocks in Chinese waters, between the Min River 22°N and 29.8°N 122°E, including 50+ at 27.8°N 121.2°E on 17 Sep'90, and 350+ at 29.1°N 122°E on 22 Sep.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*. BEW saw four at Suez anchorage on 6 Apr'88, and APB saw 25 there on 5 Jun'89.

**Chinese Crested Tern** *Sterna bernsteini*. Not seen by KM during 79 days of observations in inshore Chinese waters, between Hong Kong and Shanghai from 2 Aug to 12 Nov'90. This rarely reported species is believed to winter in the Indonesia/Philippines area, and crested-type terns there are worth a careful check.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*. MKB recorded an adult at 05.5°N 00.6°E off Ghana on 3 Apr'90. BEW saw six in Naples Harbour on 8 Apr'88, and another in Palma Harbour on 11 Apr. AHT saw 'several' on 7 Oct at 25°N 54°E, in the Persian Gulf.

**Black (or White-capped) Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris*. BEW had two aboard at c.19°S 146.7°E, in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon on 27 Feb'88. They were in poor condition, with many barbed seed pods attached to their plumage. These have been identified *in litt* by Dr.W.R.P.Bourne as seeds of the Pisonia Tree, which forms dense

thickets on many offshore cays and are used by Noddies for roosting and nesting. JGWD reported the species as 'numerous' at 05.4°S 33.2°W near Fernando de Noronha on 13 Jan'90.

#### SKIMMERS RYNCHOPIDAE

**Black Skimmer** *Rynchops nigra*. MGW saw two in full breeding plumage at Gatun Lake, Panama Canal, on 11 Mar'90.

#### AUKS ALCIDAE

**Little Auk** *Plautus alle*. South of Newfoundland, MGW saw 85+, with large flocks of shearwaters and fulmars, at 46.6°N 56.1°W on 6 Jun'89.

**Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge*. MGW saw 17 at the same time as the above observation.

**Atlantic Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*. In the Bay of Biscay, BG saw one at 46.3°N 07.1°W on 22 Jan'90. Further south, BEW saw one at 36.5°S 03.2°W on 12 Apr'88, and another the next day at 39.6°N 09.8°W. Two adults in non-breeding plumage, and one immature were seen by MKB at 42.9°N 11.8°W, and another at 42.1°N 12.1°W, well offshore from NW Spain, on 22 Mar'90. ARL recorded a single bird well offshore from Iceland at 62.3°N 16.3°W on 15 Jul'90, and two at 64.3°N 12.5°W east of Iceland on 18 Jul'90.

**Tufted Puffin** *Lunda cirrhata*. In the NW Pacific, MGW had one aboard, in winter or sub-adult plumage, at 40°N 175.2°E on 29 Apr'90

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dr. W.R.P. Bourne is thanked for his comments on the first draft.

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- Capt. N.G. Cheshire MN. 4 Willora Road, Eden Hills, South Australia 5050.

## LANDBIRD RECORDS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN - 1978-89

by Chief Officer Martin Littlewood

At the suggestion of the Editor, I agreed to conduct a computer analysis of all the records of landbirds in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean areas, published in *Sea Swallow* over a ten-year period. This is an area of diverse avifauna, and thus provides many rewarding birdwatching opportunities; I have myself sailed mainly in this area for several years, and for some time have considered comparing my own records with those already published in sections D of *Sea Swallow*. I therefore undertook to conduct this survey, from analysis of *Sea Swallow* vols 28-39, to cover all reports for the years 1978 to 1989, inclusive. These amount to a total of 298 records, involving 81 different species. These are listed in the table below, in sequence of number of reports.

Species	No. of reports
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	52
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	24
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	18
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	12
Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	11
Great Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i>	9
Green Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	7
Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	7
American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	7
Black-and-White Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	7
Purple Gallinule <i>Porphyryla martinica</i>	6
American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	6
Blackpoll Warbler <i>Dendroica striata</i>	6
Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	6
Yellow-rumped Warbler <i>Dendroica coronata</i>	5
Gray Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinus</i>	4
Burrowing Owl <i>Athene cunicularia</i>	4
Bank Swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	4
Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	3
Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	3
Purple Martin <i>Progne subis</i>	3
Semi-palmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	3
Cliff Swallow <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonata</i>	3
Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	3
Black-throated Blue Warbler <i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	3
Cape May Warbler <i>Dendroica tigrina</i>	3
Hooded Warbler <i>Wilsonia citrina</i>	3
Northern Waterthrush <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	3
Chuck-will's Widow <i>Caprimulgus carolensis</i>	3

Not listed for reasons of space are 32 species of two sightings only, and 45 species reported once only. Probably the most noteworthy of these was the Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*, in position 21.6°N 86.6°W, on 10 Apr'83. Reports from observers via Met. Logbooks have made a significant contribution to these records; one notable example was the Grey-capped Cuckoo *Coccyzus landsbergi*, photographed aboard MV *English Star* on 4 Mar'89, 100nm north of the Colombian coast. Too much significance should not be attached to the actual species reported, because the large and spectacular birds are more likely to attract attention, and to be recorded, whereas the smaller and more nondescript species are much harder to identify, and mostly go unreported. Reports of unidentified species, or with inadequate descriptions, are not included in these figures. Species most commonly recorded are shown in the two pie-charts (Figs. 1 and 2). The distribution of these records is fairly wide, as shown in the map, (Fig 3).

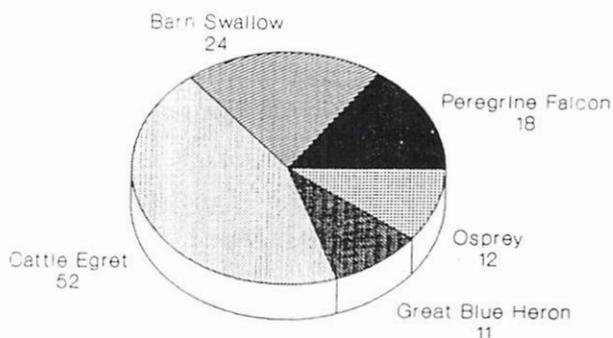


Fig. 1 10 or more reports

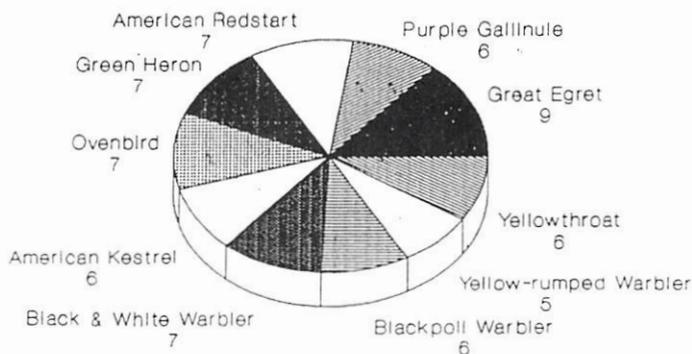
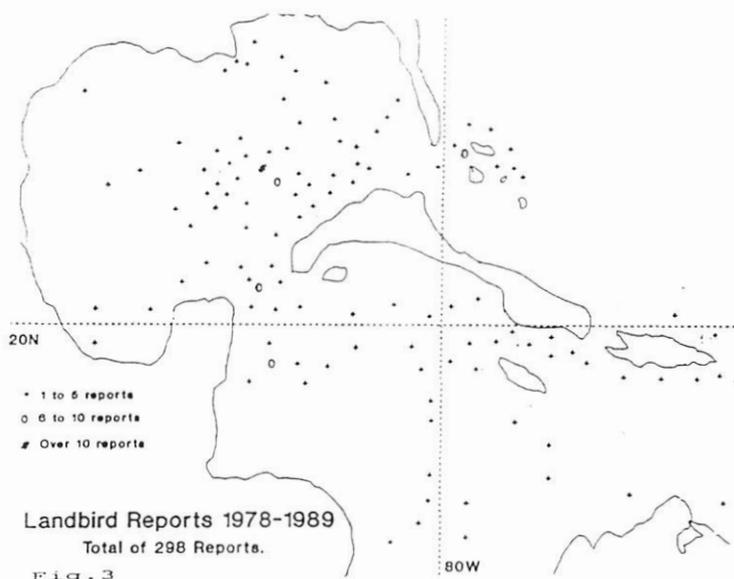


Fig. 2 5 to 9 reports

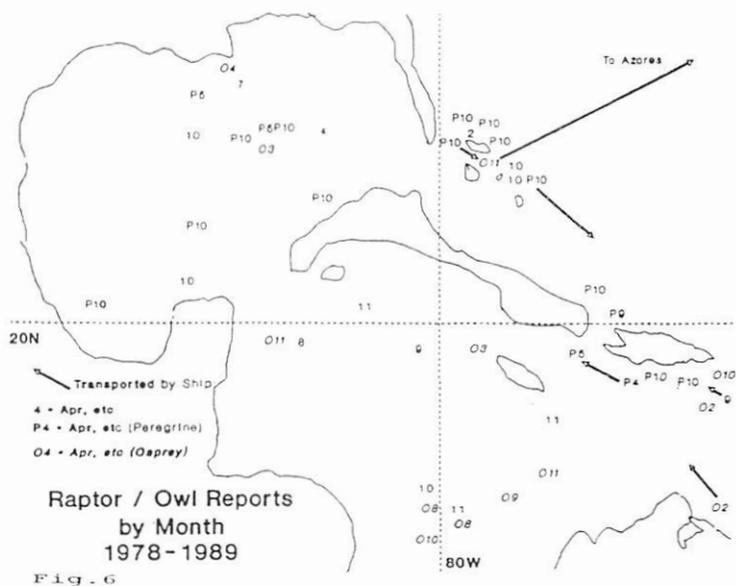
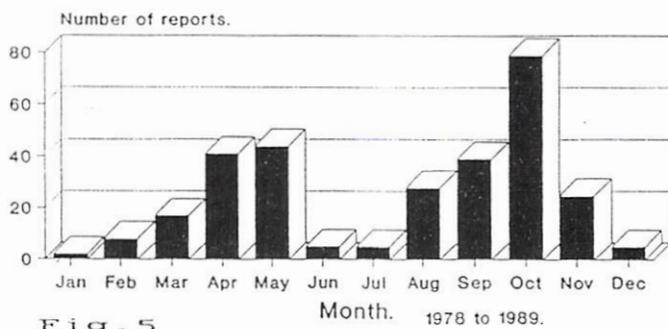
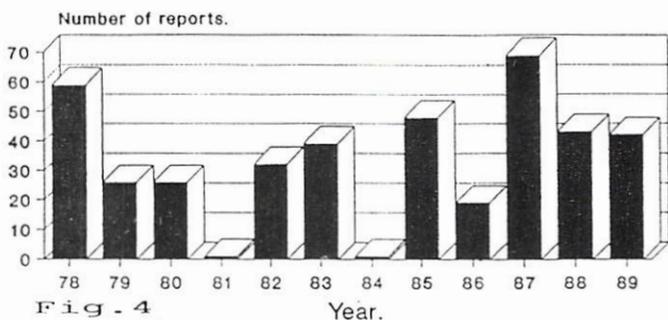


The area contains a wide range of habitats, and the numerous islands produce many local variations of the same species. The entire region is subject to tropical revolving storm activity, for many months of the year, and much of it lies within the trade-wind belts. Local birds are therefore liable to be blown great distances. Numbers of reports on an annual basis vary widely, as shown on the bar chart at Fig 4. The most obvious factor is probably the presence or absence of competent observers, at the most fruitful times of the year. Numbers on a monthly basis are shown at Fig 5, which clearly demonstrates the predicted peak periods of spring (April/May) and autumn ('fall') migration (September and October). The flyways of many migratory species from North America cross this region, and the numbers involved in autumn are probably about double those making the return journey in spring; as a generalisation, the mortality of small long distance migrants, such as warblers, is normally about 30-50%. This pattern matches the radar results of migrants crossing the Mediterranean (Casement, 1966).

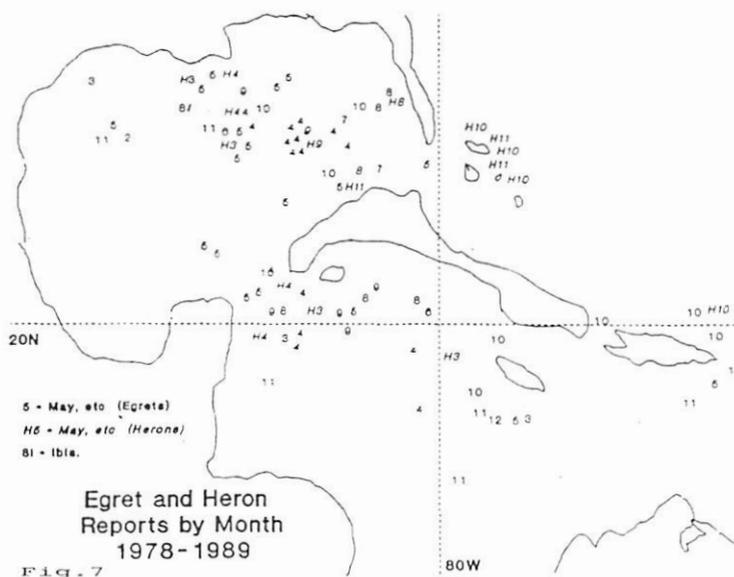
The species involved are analysed in five main groups:

**Raptors and owls.** (Fig. 6). There are 18 reports of Peregrine Falcons, and 12 of Osprey. Also included are American Kestrel (6), Merlin *Falco columbarius* (2) and Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*. Only two species of owl feature - Burrowing Owl (4), and Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (2).

**Hérons/egrets.** (Fig. 7). Anybody who has sailed in this region is very likely to have come across these at sea, the commonest being Cattle Egret, with 52 reports. These seem to be flying in all points of the compass, and are large and conspicuous enough to be easily noticed. Most are not too difficult to identify, from a reasonable distance, though care must be taken concerning these and the very similar Snowy Egret.

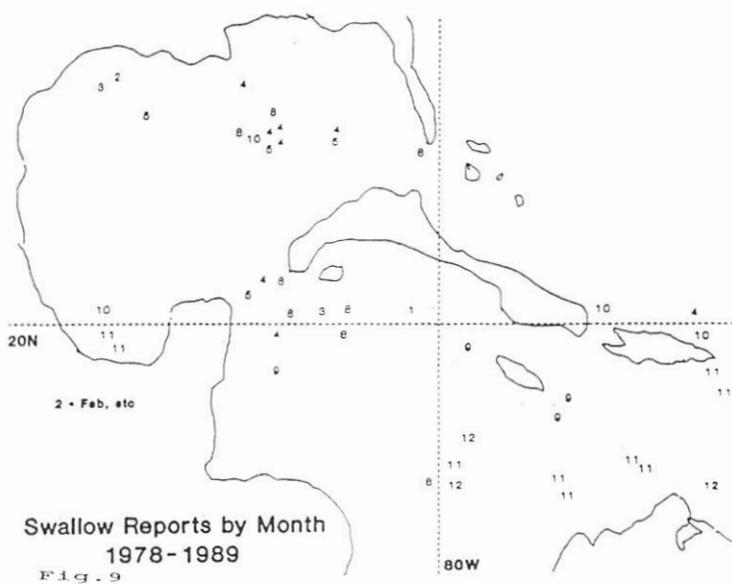
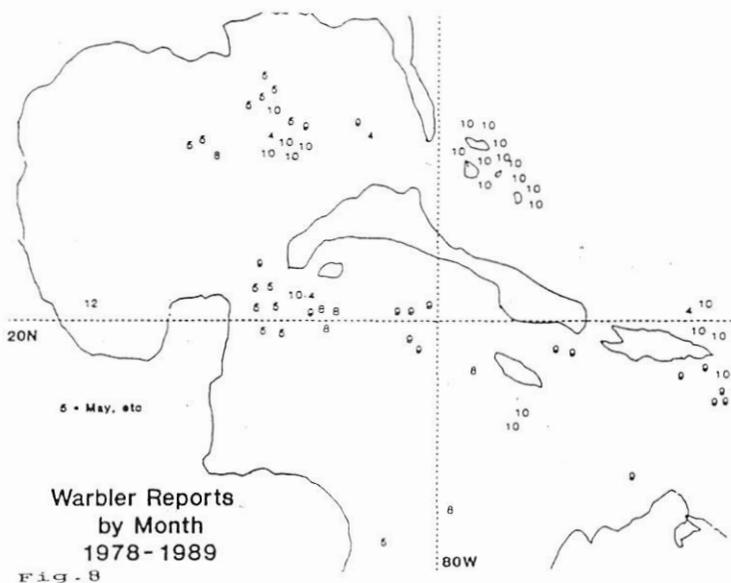


Sometimes they will divert from their course, to fly past a vessel, and frequently will settle aboard. On other occasions they will totally ignore the ship.



**Warblers.** (Fig.8). This is the most numerous group which pass through this area on annual migration, though in many cases they are unidentifiable from the descriptions given, and especially in the 'fall', many species are very difficult to identify, even in the hand. Small and inconspicuous, they are often overlooked, and unreported except by keen-eyed observers. Species identified with a high degree of certainty include Ovenbird, American Redstart (7 reports each) and Black-and-white Warbler and Common Yellowthroat (6 each). Many reports are from close to land, suggesting that these were island-hopping in order to replenish food reserves. The notable exception is a large cluster of reports, in May and October, in the central Gulf of Mexico - between Cuba and the Mississippi Delta - and the Yucatan Channel, in May. These are presumably 'drop-outs' from the main tidal movement of night migrants flying high overhead.

**Swallows.** (Fig.9). This group includes Barn Swallow (24), Bank Swallow (4), Purple Martin (3), Cliff Swallow (3) and Tree Swallow (3). During the last three months of the year, this group is reported mainly south of 20°N and east of 80°W, with some flying south in the Bay of Campeche. I have witnessed large flocks of Tree Swallows doing just that, whilst at anchor off Coatzacoalcos, Mexico. There is one report from the central Gulf of Mexico, in October, whereas April/May is normally the time for swallows to be reported here.





Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (M), 14 May 1990

Photo: Martin Littlewood

**Waders.** There are only eight reports, three in March in the central Gulf of Mexico, and the remainder along the islands to the east of the region, in August (2) and October (3). Most commonly reported is the Semi-palmated Sandpiper (3). It is puzzling that there are so few reports of waders; possibly this is an indication that these normally strong fliers at high altitude, have sufficient reserves of body fat to overfly this region, without the need to descend, and be attracted towards passing ships.

#### CONCLUSION.

This analysis is based on the reports of a small but dedicated band of observers, over 10 years, in order to demonstrate the value of this unique source of data. But more such reports are needed, and with the aid of computers can now be handled to build up a coherent picture. It is hoped that more observers will be encouraged to contribute in this way, and to send in reports of all species sighted at sea, however common or trivial they may appear to be. Finally, many thanks to the Editor, for his constructive comments and guidance, during the preparation of this article.

#### REFERENCE.

Casement M.B. 1967. *Ibis* 108:461-491.

Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MN, 90 Inglehurst Gardens, Redbridge, Ilford, Essex. IG4 5HA.

## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E. Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials. The notation BEH indicates 'Bird Examined in the Hand' form:

- Commander M.K. Barritt RN, HMS *Hecate*. 24-27 Mar '90 - N. Atlantic (1).  
Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, RV *Franklin* 30 Mar '90, 8 Sep-11 Oct '90 - Tasman Sea and Western Equatorial Pacific (3).  
Signalman R.D. Ellis RFA, RFA *Olmeda*. 5-22 Nov '90 - N. Atlantic (1); 19 Feb-6 Apr '91 Med/E. Atlantic (7 + 1 BEH).  
Radio Officer M.G. Finn MN, MV *Dock Express* 30-31 Oct '90 - Caribbean (1).  
Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MN, MT *London Spirit*. 25 Apr-6 Jun '90 - Gulf of Mexico, 16 Aug-10 Sep - W. Atlantic (7 pages of print-outs + 6 BEH).  
Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN, RRS *Charles Darwin* 26 May-15 Jul '90 - NE Atlantic (1); 6-17 Oct '90 - NE. Atlantic (1); 8-30 Jan '91 (1).  
Kevin Morgan B.Sc.. 'Marco Polo' Voyage in sailing junk *Cocachin* 4 Aug-12 Nov '90 - Hong Kong, South China Sea (4).  
A.H. Todd, RFA *Olma*. 22 Aug-24 Oct '90 - Med, Red Sea and Persian Gulf (8); 2 Nov '90-16 Mar '91 - Persian Gulf, Djibouti, Singapore, Persian Gulf (3).  
Chief Officer M.G. Weir MN, MV *OOCL Freedom*, 30 Apr '90 - N. Pacific (1); MV *OOCL Charger* 27 Sep-1 Oct - W. Atlantic (1).

Also included are a number of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs, thanks to Captain M.L.M. (Mike) Coombs of the Met. Office, Bracknell, and Captain Peter Chilman who handles the seabird records from this valuable source; these are indicated by the notation (Met). Pride of place must be given to the reports and photographs of Captain David Lloyd (MV *West Moor*) and Chief Officer P.E.T. Robinson (MV *Liverpool Star*).

For reasons of space, 1991 records are held over for *Sea Swallow* 41, and Kevin Morgan's records will be summarised in a separate article next year.

The analysis is presented in the same geographical sections (A to J) as in past years.

### SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), BAY OF BISCAY and IBERLANT

#### 1989

During the period 6-7 Oct RRS *John Biscoe* (Met) recorded a female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* aboard from 14.6° 24.1°W (18nm SE Fogo, C. Verde Is.) until 10.1°N 25.3°W (300nm from Fogo). It took no food (water or fresh meat), and was not even tempted by flying fish on deck or a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* aboard briefly. It eventually departed to a passing tanker, heading north.

On 14 Nov a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* landed aboard MV *Discovery* (Met) in an exhausted state in position 38.4°N 12.6°W, c.150nm west of Lisbon. It was seen to kill a small bird, possibly a 'pipit'.

#### 1990

On 5 Jan MV *Kagoro* (Met) reported an egret, with black legs and yellow bill, in position 24.9°N 16.7°W, 90nm west of Sahara.

On 22 Jan RFA *Diligence* (Met) reported a House Martin *Delichon urbica*, and a large dragonfly 16.4°N 18.4°W, 90nm west of Senegal, and when 80nm SW Bijagos Is. (10.6°N 17.8°W), a House Martin, a large pipit (sp. nk), and a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp.

On 12 Feb a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was aboard MV *Asifi* (Met) off Senegal, at 12.0°N 18.0°W. It remained for 24 hours.

On 20 Feb MV *Liverpool Star* (Met), passing west through the Straits of Gibraltar, reported a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* aboard briefly which departed NE when 30nm WSW Cadiz, also one or more Swallows, and a Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, which departed north.

On 2 Mar RV *Corystes* (Met) recorded a probable Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, which landed aboard in an exhausted state in position 50.9°N 06.6°W, 60nm NNW Land's End. It also landed in the sea several times.

On 5 Mar Captain D. Lloyd (MV *West Moor*) (Met), photographed a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and a Hoopoe at 40.2°N 11.5°W, 100nm west of Portugal. A White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* was aboard at 38.1°N 12.5°W, on 6th.

On 19 Mar, when just west of Gibraltar Straits, MV *Liverpool Star* (Met), recorded a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* struggling low northwards, at 36.1°N 6.4°W; wind was ESE/7. A second Kite was seen later at 36.5°N 7.6°W. Swallows and martins were also seen heading north, mostly singles, but also a group of 20 Swallows. A single possible Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus* sp. was also aboard. On 29 Mar the same ship reported two Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* aboard at dusk, when 15nm north of C. St. Vincent, 37.1°N 9.3°W.

In pers. comm. to WRPB, Brian Hill recorded the following on a cruise to the Caribbean: Willow Warbler on 23 Mar at 44.8°N 8.5°W, off C. Finisterre, a Kestrel (F), a possible Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni* (noted 'paler below'), also a Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* at 26.5°N 21.1°W, 200nm SW Canary Is. on 27 Mar.

During the period 24-27 Mar, MKB recorded the following off West Africa: probable Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* - several sightings on 24th, when 110nm NE Porto Santo I., Madeira (34.1°N 14.7°W), and on 25th when 65 nm north of Salvage Is., 31.2°N 15.4°W; Woodchat Shrike on 24th, 90nm NE Porto Santo I.; Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and House Martin on 25th, when 65nm north of the Salvages. A Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and a Swallow were sighted on 26th when 90nm south of Canary Is., and another Swallow at 20.4°N 17.6°W on 27th.

On 2 Apr a Short-eared Owl was found sheltering aboard RRS *Discovery* (Met) when at 46.9°N 08.4°W, 200nm SW Ushant. It was thought to have been blown by strong offshore winds.

On 19 Apr a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* was aboard MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) for 40 mins, at 37.0°N 09°W, off C. St. Vincent. It departed just before dusk, and was last seen heading north; winds were NNW/5-6.

On 16 May MV *Pholas* (Met) recorded a Curlew/Whimbrel *Numenius* sp., which landed aboard at 55.9°N 16.6°W, 110nm SW Rockall.

On 19 May FPV *Vigilant* (Met) noted a Swallow aboard briefly, tired and dishevelled, when 90nm SW Barra Hd., Hebrides (56.4°N 09.1°W).

On 26 May ARL reported two House Martin circling, and a Kestrel (F) roosting aboard in position 49.5°N 12.5°W, 180nm SW Mizen Hd.

On 11 Jun ARL saw a swallow/martin briefly at 46.9°N 15.4°W, 390nm WSW C. Finisterre. A House Martin was sighted briefly on 17 Jun at 50.0°N 7.5°W, 50nm WSW Bishop Rock.

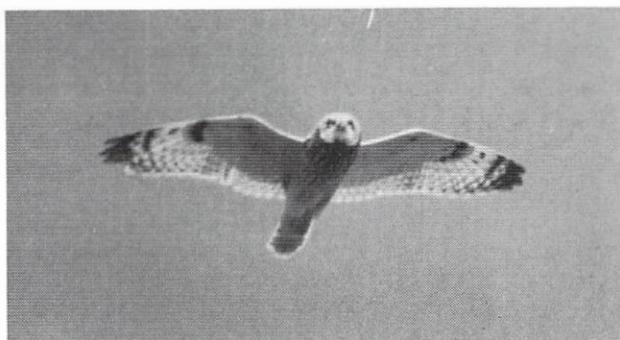
During the period 21-28 June, OWS *Cumulus* recorded a number of Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* at weather station LIMA, in mid-Atlantic (see analysis page 56).

On 14 Sep MV *City of Plymouth* (Met) reported a Hoopoe and two Turtle Doves at 30.1°N 9.3°W, NW C. St. Vincent. They remained overnight, but disappeared probably whilst transiting Straits of Gibraltar.

On 18 Sep a juv male Kestrel was sighted aboard MV *Tokyo Bay* (Met) at 35.8°N 16.4°W, 330nm WSW C. St. Vincent.

ARL had a close view of a Willow Warbler aboard on 6 Oct, at 28.1°N 22.1°W, 210nm west of Canary Is.; wind was NE/3. A Kestrel (juv.F) was aboard pm 15 Oct, at 19.6°N 20.7°W, 210nm SW Cape Verde Is.; winds were NE 5/6. A Swallow circled the ship at, 19.0°N 20.2°W, 500nm SW C. Verdes on 17 Oct; winds were NE 5/6 for previous three days, and several butterflies were also seen.

On 20 Oct MV *Liverpool Star* (Met), in the SW approaches - 15nm SW Bishop Rock (40.6°N 6.7°W) recorded Willow/Chiff *Phylloscopus* sp., White Wagtail, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1M, 1F), and Garden Warbler *S. borin*.



Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, off West Africa 11 Nov. 1990  
Photo: Captain David Lloyd MN

On 28 Oct RRS *Bransfield* (Met) reported an unidentified swift *Apus* sp., circling the ship at 13.6°N 21.2°W, 150nm SE C. Verde Is. The wind was NE/3, 6/8 cloud.

During the period 5-22 Nov, RDE recorded Redwings *Turdus iliacus* (4) and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, when 20nm north of St. Kilda am. on 5th; they departed pm heading SE. A group of seven Redwings overflew ship at 50ft, heading SE at 1045 on 6th; weather was overcast with occasional showers and poor vis, winds light and variable.

On 11 Nov a Short-eared Owl was photographed aboard MV *West Moor* (Met) in position 19.4°N 17.9°W, 65nm west Mauritania, 90nm SSW C. Blanco. A Garden Warbler was photographed when 25nm SW C. Verte, Dakar, and a group of 40+ small birds, later identified as probable Village Weavers *Ploceus cucullatus*. One may have been a juv. male Chocolate & Black Weaver *P. castaneofuscus*.

At 1400 on 16 Nov a probable Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (no description given), landed aboard MV *Kukaina* (Met) in position 14.2°N 17.6°W, 30nm SW Dakar; it was seen feeding on locusts and small birds.

On 23 Nov MV *Kagoro* recorded a probable Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*, when 20nm off Liberia, and three probable Little Egrets *E. garzetta* at 32.3°N 14.4°W, 100nm east of Madeira; these were crossing the ship's track, heading NW, and were attacked by Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* following the ship.

## SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1990

On 24 Apr MV *Shetland Service* (Met) recorded, in Fulmar Oilfield, an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, and several Linnets *Acanthis cannabina*. Several of the latter were later picked up dead. A Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was aboard 20 mins.

During the period 1-3 May, the following species were recorded by MV *Shetland Service* (Met), in the area 56.5°N 02.2°E, 140nm NE Northumberland coast. Winds were generally light NNE, with good vis; Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Pied Wagtail, Tree Sparrow *Passer montana*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, and Oystercatcher. A Collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto* was sighted on 31 May.

On 3 May Captain P.C. Dyer, MV *Shetland Service*, photographed a Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* at Fulmar oilfield, 56.5°N 02.1°E. This was later found dead, and examined (BEH).

On 13 May MV *Elk* (Met) recorded a Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, which came aboard when off the Danish coast, and was later found dead in the central North Sea.

On 29 May FPV *Westra* (Met) recorded a possible male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in position 59.4°N 00.6°E, 75nm SE Shetland - Beryl oilfield.

During June, photographs were taken of Oystercatcher, Golden Plover (4), and a Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* aboard MV *Shetland Service* (Met) in Fulmar Oilfield.

MV *Telnes* (Met), on passage between Rotterdam and Tilbury, recorded the following passerines: Pied Wagtail (juv) and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* aboard briefly on 24 Aug, and a probable Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* on 26 Aug, between Tilbury and Zeebrugge.

On 12 June, Robin Prytherch *in litt*, on passage by yacht from Dartmouth to Channel Is., recorded three Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* 8nm east of Start Point, heading NE, and two single Swifts *Apus apus*, one at 1430 in mid-Channel, and another flying NE just NW of Casquets.

On 20 Oct MV *Shetland Service* (Met), at 57.7°N 0.5°E recorded a large group (100+) Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* flying east, low over the water, despite wind ESE/20kts. When in vicinity of platform, their uniform direction became confused/erratic. Some were harassed by Herring Gulls and Common Gulls, and were forced into the water, and subsequently killed and eaten. One Fieldfare landed aboard, and was positively identified. A flock of Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* was sighted heading NE; two were found dead aboard over previous two days. On 4 Nov a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was sighted flying low easterly, being mobbed by gulls; wind was E/6, with frequent rain showers.

On 4 Nov a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* was photographed aboard MV *West Moor* (Met) at 49.2°N 4.5°W, 25nm NNE Ushant.

## SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°W)

1990

On 18 Apr MV *Nickerie* (Met) recorded Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (4) aboard overnight at 27.9°N 37.3°W; they departed 3 hrs after sunrise on 19th. Two more arrived at 2020 at 22.6°N 42.5°W, remained overnight, and departed am 20th.

On passage from Willemstads to Curacao, MCL recorded a probable Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* 150nm NE Grand Turk I., 23.6°N 69.4°W, on 11 May, and a Barn Swallow at 37.6°N 74.2°W, 64nm ESE Chincoteague on 13 May. On 18th, when 30nm SE Carolina, he recorded three Snowy Egrets *Egretta thula* (one single juv and two adult), and a Little Blue Heron *E. caerulea* - they departed NW. Also seen aboard was a Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*.

MCL recorded a Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, first sighted when at 33.0°N 70.3°W 270nm west of Bermuda at 1640 on 16 Aug; it remained throughout most of 17th. On 20 Aug a Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* was aboard on 20 Aug when 44nm ESE C. Hatteras, 34.7°N 74.9°W.

On 10 Sep MCL saw a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, which departed NW at 25.6°N 66.9°W, 345nm NE Middle Caicos Is.

MGW reported several Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* 27 Sep-1 Oct, off the east coast USA - see short note page 70.

MGF also recorded two Peregrines taking passage 30-31 Oct, from near Puerto Rico (Mona passage) to Panama. Both caught and ate a small bird each, and were seen unsuccessfully chasing swallows.

## SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1990

On 15 Apr SS *Lima* (Met) recorded six Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* aboard briefly in Yucatan basin, 19.6°N 82.4°W.

During the period 25-30 Apr MCL recorded a Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* and two Mourning Doves *Zenaidra macroura* 250nm SW Louisiana at 25.3°N 91.5°W on 25th; a probable Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* at 19.5°N 93.0°W, 46nm NNW Mexico on 26th; a probable White-winged Dove *Z. asiatica* was seen aboard on 28th at 20.5°N 93.4°W, 122nm NNW Punta Buey, Mexico; four Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* circled the ship at 25.8°N 89.9°W, 185nm south of Mississippi Delta on 28th; an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* landed aboard on 30th at 29.4°N 87.5°W, 55nm SW Mobile Pt., and a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* flew past heading NE.

On passage from Venezuela to Mobile, USA, MCL recorded a Cattle Egret on 1 Jun, at 23.7°N 86.1°W, 130nm SE Cuba; it continued flying east, ignoring the ship. A Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus* arrived from SSE, and attempted to land. Further Cattle Egrets were seen on 2 Jun (one, at 25.5°N 87.5°W - 55nm SSE Mobile) and three aboard 4 hrs on 6 Jun, when 200nm SW Cape San Blas, Florida.

On 14 Oct a Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (1st winter M) landed aboard MV *Pacific Crane* (Met), 12 hours after leaving Panama heading eastwards. It remained for 48 hours, fed by the crew with bread, milk and cornflakes! It disappeared when near Haiti.

On 23 Oct MV *Pacific Teal* (Met) recorded a hawk, possibly a Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperi* attempting to land aboard in position 12.3°N 76.3°W, 120nm NW Columbian coast.

## SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN and BLACK SEA

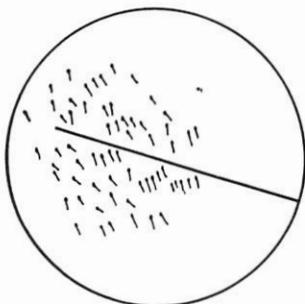
1990

On 15 Mar MV *Liverpool Star* (Met), recorded a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* aboard, shortly after clearing SW Crete, heading for Sicily, at 34.9°N 23.6°E. It remained atop containers for 'd, and took flight when attacked by two gulls; it was last seen at dusk. Also aboard was a White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*.

On 3 Apr MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) recorded four White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*, flying low northwards in line ahead, when 56nm SE Sicily, 36.5°N 15.6°E. They appeared to lose orientation when passing the ship, turning east and separating, but later rejoined to resume a northerly heading. This deviation was repeated similarly when passing over another ship, heading west, to the north. On 5 Apr a Long-eared Owl was sighted aboard at 34.7°N 28.6°E, 120nm east of Crete. The ship's course was 093°. The owl was very nervous, and was frightened from its roost 3-4 times, before finally heading north at about noon.

On 14 Apr an adult male Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* came aboard MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) at 35.2°N 22.7°E, 42nm west of Crete. It commenced unsuccessfully chasing two Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and a House Martin *Delichon urbica*, and continued this until dusk; it remained overnight but departed soon after sunrise on 15th.

**Radar records.** On 17 Apr, MV *Peninsular Bay* (Met) was in position 32.3°N 30.0°E, 75nm north of the Egyptian coast, and recorded the following observation: 'hundreds of small but sharp echoes observed on both radars (3cm and 10cm), and on all ranges. Travelling on approx. course 340°T and at around 40 kts. Detected at about 8-9 miles to SE, and passing over vessel to NW. Second trace echoes etc. thought to be unlikely answer. Migrating birds only plausible observation. But although no cloud (slightly hazy sky), binoculars revealed no sign. Some of the echoes joined into lines at 90° to direction of travel....' See fig.



**COMMENT.** This phenomenon is remarkably similar to my own observations in an aircraft carrier in the early 1960's, in the same area. From their speed (40 kts), I suggest these could be groups of ducks or waders, or possibly quail. (MBC).

On 7 May, when approaching Cyprus from the west, a number of small birds came aboard MV *Liverpool Star* (Met). Most were unidentifiable, but two were found dead and identified as a Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, and a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. Also seen was a Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. On 12 May a Hobby Falco *subbuteo* came aboard MV *Liverpool Star*, at 33.9°N 29.5°E, 175 nm north of the Egyptian coast. On 14th, when westbound in the central Ionian Sea, at 36.1°N 18.0°E, a mixed flock of 22 swallows and martins were counted aboard, also a Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* was caught and photographed. The hirundines were still around at dusk; winds were light and variable.

At 1110 on 24 Aug AHT recorded a probable Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, when 12nm east of Gibraltar.

On 28 Aug AHT saw a group of 40 Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* flying south, when 150nm north of Benghazi. On 29th, when 40nm south of Crete he saw a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* flying south, and distant views of two groups (2 + 4) of other raptors, possibly juv. Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus*, also flying south. On 30th five probable Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* were sighted flying south towards Port Said, 85nm distant; a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was also circling the ship.

On 7 Oct MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) recorded five Black-eared Wheatears *Oenanthe hispanica* aboard when anchored 1nm west of Ashdod, Israel. They were feeding on small white moths, but took shelter when frightened by the arrival of a Lanner Falcon *Falco bearnicus* which perched on a container for four hours. On passage westwards, the following migrants were recorded 14/15 Oct: Swallow (2 juv), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1M), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (2F), when NW of Malta on 14th; Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Chaffinch (2-3), Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, White Wagtail, and a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, when off the Algerian coast. The wind during this period was W-SW/3-5.

At 1250-1430 on 4 Nov a probable Long-eared Owl was aboard MV *Cardigan Bay* (Met), passing westbound through Malta Channel, 22nm south of Sicily, 36.4°N 14.5°E. It took no notice of a number of small birds also on board.

## SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1990

On 20 Mar a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was sighted aboard MV *Forthbank* (Met) at 19.6°N 39.0°E.

On 28 Mar, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was photographed aboard MV *Act 1* (Met) by 2/O Shaw, in position 14.3°N 42.3°E. It took no notice of small 'sparrow-sized' birds also aboard.

On 25 Jun MV *Lumpus* (Met) reported an unidentified kestrel *Falco* sp. in the Gulf of Aden, when 15nm south of Aden coast, 12.5°N 44.9°E.

On 25 Sep, MV *Craiguerdo* (Met), reported a probable Scops Owl *Otus scops* aboard briefly, 12.3N 48.1E, 70nm north of Somalia.

On 2 Sep AHT recorded the following when SW of Jeddah: Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* aboard 20 mins; Hoopoe (10 mins); Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (F) found dead; 20 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* flying close past ship, heading S.

In the Gulf of Aden, on 4 Sep, AHT recorded Palm Dove *S.senegalensis* aboard am/pm, Collared Dove *S. decaocto* - one aboard; Lanner Falcon *Falco bearnicus* - around for one hour; Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* (F) aboard 30 mins; Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 2/3 around briefly; Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (F), possibly *pygmaea* race. On 5 Sep, a Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* was seen briefly pm, and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striatus*, and a juv. Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*.

In the southern Red Sea on 13 Nov, a probable Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* arrived from the west to land aboard MV *Encounter Bay* (Met), in position 19.5°N 39.1°E.

On 6 Dec AHT saw a Green Heron *Butorides striatus* perched on a berthing rope in Djibouti harbour, and another on 8th.

## SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1990

On 6 Sep AHT recorded two Cuckoos *Cuculus canarus*, one later found dead, when off Oman. In the same area on 7th, he saw a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and a small finch, possibly a Sinai Rosefinch *Carpodacus syniocus*.

On 29 Sep MV *Mobil Falcon* (Met) reported a probable Lanner Falcon *Falco bearnicus* aboard in position 15.8°N 70.4°E, 190nm SW Ratnagiri; it preyed on smaller birds accompanying vessel. On 16 Oct a possible Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* was aboard at 05.9°N 83.7°E, 120nm SE Sri Lanka.

At 1145 on 16 Dec AHT saw a Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychos cinnamomeus* circling his ship when 240nm east of Sri Lanka.

## SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1990

In the southern Persian Gulf on 12 Sep, AHT saw a Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. In the same general area, during the period 20 Sep-21 Oct he saw a Hoopoe on 17th, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* on 18th, a probable (F) Black-eared Wheater *Oenanthe hispanica* on 19th-20th, a Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (M) on 20th, and a Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, in winter plumage on 24 Sep. A House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (F), was aboard 7-8 Oct, 1-2 Palm Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis* on 10th, a Nightjar on 13th, two Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on 17th, and a Turtle Dove *S. turtur* on 18th. Two adult males and two others (possibly female) Desert Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia minuta* were aboard on 19th, and a Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* am/pm on 21st.

On a visit to 'Khawr Dubai' Wildlife sanctuary, two miles south of Dubai on 24 Oct, AHT recorded Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* (100s), Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (1), Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (20+), Curlew *Numenius arquata* (12+), Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (49), Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (2), Terek Sandpiper *T. cinereus* (1), Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (4+), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (few), Little Stint *C. minuta* (10+) and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (one fishing).

On 2 Nov AHT recorded a White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* flying south, off Jebel Ali U.A.E., and a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* which perched briefly aboard. On 7 Nov a Saker *Falco cherrug* was aboard 30 mins when 30nm east of Qatar.

## SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1989

On 30 Oct MV *Clydebank* (Met) recorded six 'large swifts - white below, black above' heading south, at 12.2°S 135.3°W, 200nm SE Marquesa Is.

1990

On 30 Mar NGS recorded a Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* at 31.9°S 164.1°E, 470nm WNW C. Reinga NZ.

On 3 Apr a probable Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava* was photographed aboard MV *Zidona* (Met) in the South China Sea, when north of Natuna Is., 05.2°N 108.5°E.

On 8 May a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was reported by MV *Act 3*, at 05.1°N 85.2°W, 300nm SW Panama.

After departing from Hong Kong for Singapore on 18 May, MV *Arma* (Met) recorded about 40-50 small birds aboard, and also a larger bird which came to be known as the 'killer bird', from its habit of attacking the former. It caught at least 12 of these with its feet, and killed them with its long beak, but did not eat them. From the description and rough sketch it was probably a Curlew/Whimbrel *Numenius* sp., although this behaviour seems very untypical. Photographs of the victims suggested these were mainly Brown Shrikes *Lanius cristatus*.

On 5 Jun four Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were photographed aboard MV *Zidonia* off Okinawa. All were weak, and later died.

On 8 Sep NGS saw two dark phase Reef Herons *Egretta sacra* flying SSE, when 9nm SSE East Is., Louisiade Archipelago, PNG, (10.5°S 152.1°E. Later the same day, a small dark blue swiftlet, identified as a Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* was aboard 15 mins, when 12nm ESE Gawa Is.

On 27 Sep NGS recorded a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 108nm north of Admiralty I. at 0.2°S 147°E.

NGS also saw the following species near the Eastern Caroline Group: Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* on 6 Oct, at 5.0°N 150.5°E, 122nm SE Pulusu I.; a Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* on 7 Oct, 66nm north of Nukuroro Is. On 8 Oct a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, in non-breeding plumage, came aboard at 2.6°S 155°E, 104nm north of Kapara Marangi Is., which remained for 18 hours until 75nm south of these islands, at 0.3°S 155°E. On 11 Oct a Pacific Swallow *H. tahitiica* flew around ship when 22nm ENE Bougainville I., PNG (4.9°S 155°E).

On 6 Oct MV *Snowdon* (Met) recorded three probable Cattle Egrets aboard for two days (until 8th), off East coast of Mindinao, Philippines; also seen was a probable Brown Shrike.

On 6 Nov two probable Green Herons *Butorides striatus* were aboard MV *Tor Bay* (Met), in position 9.2°N 109.6°E, 120nm SE Vietnam; they remained 8 hours, sheltering from the wind, as the ship headed 040° at 18 kts.

On 14 Nov two Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* landed briefly aboard MV *Southland Star* (Met) in position 24.6°N 129.1°W, 1200nm SW California; wind was ENE/2.

On 17 Nov an egret landed aboard in position 14.1°N 140-7°W, 850nm SE Hawaii. It remained aboard for 2 hrs, but then disappeared. From photos taken it was subsequently identified as a juv. Cattle Egret, with newly moulted primaries.

On 17 Nov MV *Scirocco Universal* (Met) reported a probable Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* which alighted on the masthead light, at 08.9°N 122.4°E, NW Mindinao, Philippines; it remained there overnight.

In Sembawang Harbour, Singapore, (21 Dec-12 Jan'91) AHT reported two White-collared Kingfishers *Halcyon chloris* frequently perching on the rudder of a ship close astern.

## SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1990

At 1550 on 20 Mar MEW saw a group of seven Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* flying SW, when 17nm east of East Cove, (East Falkland), and at 1750 a Peregrine Falco *Falco peregrinus* arrived when 7nm east of Eagle Point. It was carrying a Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides* sp. which it ate aboard, and remained 24 hours until off Cape Dolphin when it departed towards West Falkland.

A single Cattle Egret was seen during a boat transfer off Cape Dolphin on 21st, and two further Cattle Egrets were aboard 4 hours on 3 May, 240nm east of East Cove.

M.B.C.

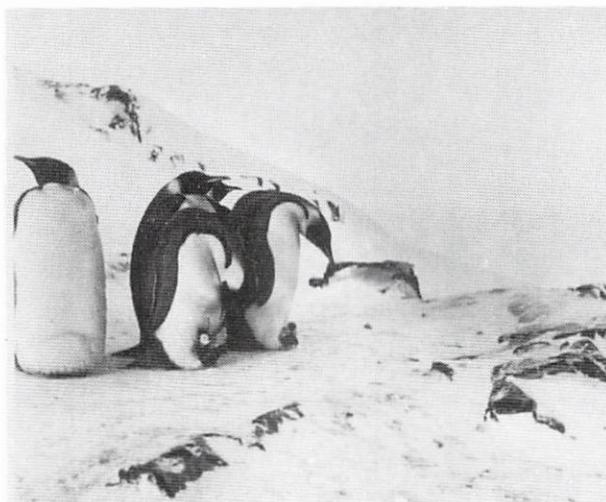
## SOUTH ATLANTIC REMINISCENCES

by Surgeon Captain David Dalgliesh LVO, OBE, Royal Navy

Sitting up in bed one morning, I watched a Kingfisher feeding, and from this comfortable position I mused on The Editor's comments in *Sea Swallow* 39, and thought of the more unusual places I have been fortunate to visit. These brief notes are offered, in the hopes of stimulating others to put pen to paper. Historical records of such places may have some added value for comparison, now that the spotlight is on conservation issues, and on Antarctica in particular.

**The Dion Islands, 4nm south of Cape Alexandra at 67°45'S 68°35'W. 1949.** In 1947, as a young Surgeon-Lieutenant RN, I was loaned to the Colonial Office to serve with the Falkland Islands Dependency Survey (F.I.D.S.). Our leader was Dr. (now Sir) Vivian Fuchs, and we went originally for one year to the Marguerite Bay area, at 68°10'S. I was the Medical Officer to our base on Stonington Island, and also to the other bases in the F.I.D., some 500 miles away; history, diagnosis and treatment were all carried out by radio. Additionally, I was dentist, veterinary surgeon to our 80 huskies; cook, carpenter, photographer, dog driver, and even gardener to a double-glazed 6'x4' greenhouse! During a coastal survey lasting eight weeks, we happened to discover a small rookery of about 300 Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri* on these islands - only the third known in the world at this time.

At the end of our year, Jan/Feb 1949, the ship couldn't get nearer than 250 miles due to unbroken sea ice. After trying for a couple of months they came up on the radio saying 'sorry, we can't get in this



Emperor Penguins, winter 1949

*Photo:* David Dalgliesh

year, but don't worry, we'll come back again next year!' So it was that three of us were camped for the winter in Marguerite Bay, on the Dion Islands, about 64nm west of the Grahmland Peninsular. To fill in the time, various trips were thought up by Fuchs, including this one to collect a series of Emperor Penguin embryos for the Natural History Museum. (A similar project had been unsuccessfully attempted by Cherry-Garrard, Wilson and Bowers in 1911 at Cape Crozier). One egg each day was taken, and the embryo removed and fixed in alcohol etc., (and these specimens are now indeed in the BM(NH), at Tring). We then had the rest of the egg remaining, and so we ate it, scrambled - delicious. One night we heard a terrific commotion among the dogs; we had 18 ie. two teams. It being my turn to be 'inside man', the other two went out into the dark, the blizzard, and the commotion. One of the dogs (called 'Crow' - he was black) had slipped his trace, and apart from generously giving each of the other 17 dogs a 7lb hunk of frozen seal, had created havoc among the penguins. After securing Crow, the two spent a considerable time putting chicks back under willing Mums, but nevertheless found one chick over, and no willing Mum. The blizzard continued, and they shouted from outside the tent for me to prepare a receptacle for the chick to keep him warm - which I duly did, with a large biscuit tin. Very soon a hand was thrust through the folds of the tent entrance, holding a small, grey-downed chick with his round, black and white head. When the other two returned inside, the chick loudly chirruped indicating it was hungry. So some frozen fish and seal-blood was thawed out in a cigarette tin, and knowing they were fed on regurgitated food, the tin was passed around the three of us for each to spit into - our endeavour at the nearest substitute. The chick loved it, and for the remainder of the night our sleep was broken every hour, when it demanded more. Next morning, of course still fairly dark, but with no blizzard, we found a willing Mum who, to our great relief, accepted back our chick.



Brown Boobies and Noddies, St Paul's Rocks, November 1964

*Photo: David Dalgliesh*

**The Caird Coast, Weddell Sea.** From December 1955 to March 1957, I was on loan from the Royal Navy as leader of the Advance Party of the Royal Society's expedition to set up the main British Observatory for the International Geophysical Year in the Antarctic. We were the first men to land on the 400 mile Caird Coast, which Shackleton had attempted, unsuccessfully, in 1915. Our base was named Halley Bay, and it remains very active to this day, though the present site is the third (or fourth), because the shelf ice is always flowing west, and the edge repeatedly breaks off as an iceberg! At  $75^{\circ}31'S$   $26^{\circ}38'W$ , we discovered a rookery of 20-30 thousand Emperor Penguins. What a noise, sight and smell! The following winter, when laying time arrived, some of the members talked of visiting them to gather eggs to eat. I was opposed to the idea for we had plenty to eat - though admittedly nothing fresh - and said so. It was only a 2.5 mile ski-trek away, but evidently the Almighty was on my side, as blizzard after blizzard blew, until it was too late for the gourmets; for by then the eggs were incubating, and unpalatable.

**St. Paul's Rocks,  $0.23^{\circ}N$   $29.4^{\circ}W$ .** In November 1964, aboard HMS *Tiger* towards the end of a tour round South America, the Captain was eventually leant on enough to alter course slightly towards these barren rocks, 400 miles off Brazil. Together with two companions, I landed briefly, and spent an incredible half hour ashore. Because of their position on the equator, there are no 'seasons', and seabirds breed there continuously. Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*, Common Noddies *Anous stolidus* and White-capped Noddies *A. minutus*, were present in thousands, in all stages of development, from eggs to fully immature plumage with their parents, - they showed no fear of us. Time was insufficient to attempt a count. Moreover, many thousands took to the air, when disturbed by the siren of one of our (unnamed!) escorting frigates.

Dr. David Dalgliesh, Farmstone, Halwell, Totnes, South Devon. TQ9 7JF

## LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1990

Summarised by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy

Landbird records from or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) were received from H.J. Freckleton and Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus* covering six trips (voyage Nos. 45-50). Records cover the following periods:

2-27 May, 21-26 Jun, 27 Jul-12 Aug, 16 Sep, 24 Sep-20 Oct, 5 Nov.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. 17 May (one resting aboard). 18-21 Oct (1); remained aboard resting from southerly gale (Force 7-9) and throughout 20-21st perched on foremast preying on migrants including at least one Dunlin and a Wheatear. Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*. One arrived at dawn on 2 May, found dead 4th. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. pm 2 May (1), 6 May (two circled, dep NNW), 12 May (1), 20 Oct (2 - both probably fell victims to Merlin).

Knot *C. canutus*. One resting on deck 27 Jul.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles found dead 6 May and 8 May, 16 Sep (1 exhausted), 24-25 Sep (1), 27-28 Sep (12 - several caught and released - wind W-NW/4-5), 19 Oct (1 briefly), 20 Oct (1).

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. One resting on deck 27 Jul.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*. One aboard all day 11 May.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptus minima*. One resting on deck 12 Aug.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. One arrived pm 12 May - died am 13th, one caught and released 13 May, two caught and released 27 May.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. One aboard briefly 12 Aug.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. A group of five (3 adults (2F + 1M), 2 juv), first sighted 2215z 21 Jun; all were chirpy and lively; winds were 190/5kts, and remained light and variable. At 0700z the flock was joined by three more (sexes not determined); they all flew off south at 0845z but one juv returned 5 mins later and was later found dead. On passage back to UK on 28 Jun, a single adult (F) landed aboard at 57.4°N 15.5°W, 70nm SW Rockall; wind was SW/3.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*. Two juveniles landed on deck on 5 Nov; one exhausted was captured and kept on board.

Rook *C. frugilegus*. On 5 Nov four juveniles were around all day, riding on a 'wind wave' over the ship; the wind was SE/5-6.

**Comment.** The Crossbill records are of high interest, and mirror the remarkable influx also seen in the North Sea, and the UK in 1990. The Rook and Jackdaw records are unusual, and confusion seems possible between the two species seen only in flight; no description details were given, but the observer indicated identification "positive". This flock must have been blown far out to sea by the strong SE winds.

M.B.C.

## SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are from OWS *Cumulus*, and the format of the summary remains unchanged. The total number of observation days this year was 292 - four days less than in 1989.

Totals of daily counts (including immatures shown in brackets): Fulmars 11,666 (10 blue phase); Gannets 156 (61); Herring Gulls 7 (5); Lesser Black-backed Gulls 465 (196); Great Black-backed Gulls 190 (6); Glaucous Gulls 14 (7); Iceland Gulls 6 (2); and over 16,534 Kittiwakes (not separated). The last is a 56% increase, compared with at least 10,557 Kittiwakes last year, with averages of 149 per day in January, and 146 per day in February.

A possible new species reported this year is a Gull-billed Tern, which landed on deck on 12 June. No description was given, so it cannot be confirmed; however it is a migratory species, and it is possible that adverse weather could have driven it north. Also new this year is a Sabine's Gull, reported on 10 May. This is an acceptable date for a bird returning to the breeding grounds.

Species reported in previous year, but not seen in 1990, were Cory's and Little Shearwaters, Wilson's and Leach's Storm-petrels, Northern Black-headed Gull, Bonaparte's and Slender-billed Gulls, Little Tern and Razorbill.

One oiled bird was reported - a Great Black-backed Gull, in March.

The Society is most grateful for the continuing efforts of the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, for providing this unique data.

### Summary of Seabird Sightings, Station Lima (57°N 20°W)

Month 1990	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (292)	25	21	22	25	26	25	15	26	25	26	25	31
Fulmar	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	x	x	o	x	o
Great Shearwater						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sooty Shearwater						—	—	+	+	—	—	—
Manx Shearwater						—	—	—	+	—	—	—
British Storm-petrel		—	—								—	
Gannet		—	—	—	+	+	+	—	+	—		
Great Skua	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	—	—		—
Pomarine Skua							+	—	—			
Arctic Skua	—	—				—	—	—	—			
Long-tailed Skua					—							
Herring Gull							—	—		—		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	+	+	—	+	—	+	—	+	+	+	—	—
Great Black-backed Gull		—	—		+	—	—	—	—	—		—
Glaucous Gull	—	—								—		—
Iceland Gull	—	—		—								
Kittiwake	x	x	x	x	o	+	o	o	x	+	o	+
Sabine's Gull					—							
Little Gull							—					
Arctic Tern				—		—	—	+	—			
Common Tern						—	—					
Sandwich Tern										—		
Gull-billed Tern?						—	—					
Little Auk					—							
Guillemot					—	—						
Puffin					—							

KEY — Occasional sightings o Average 10-49 per day  
 + Average 1-9 per day x Average 50 or more per day

## ROUND THE WORLD IN THIRTY DAYS

by Peter Cunningham

Even by air a journey round the world is not without interest to a birdwatcher. In the course of a visit to New Zealand in November 1989 I made the acquaintance for the first time of quite a number of species - from the time my wife and I landed at Bangkok to change planes, to our overnight stay in a San Franciscan skyscraper on the way home. Welcome Swallows *Hirundo tahitica neoxena*, Asian Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus malaccensis* and Common Mynahs *Acridotheres tristis* helped to pass the time at the former, and during breakfast within sight of the Golden Gates, two new gulls, the Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*, Glaucous-winged *L. glaucescens*, together with Ring-billed *Larus delawarensis*, and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* flew by our balcony.

An overnight stay in Singapore was a literal washout, our arrival coinciding with the end of the monsoon season. It rained as it does in Lewis at its worst, except that the rain was vertical instead of horizontal. As a result my only new birds were House Crows *Corvus splendens* and a species of swiftlet *Collocalia sp.*, several of which were sheltering in a building under construction near our hotel.

**Australia.** We had three days in Sydney whence friends took us around the Harbour and hinterland. The Silver Gulls *L. novaehollandiae* were a distinctive feature of the impressive waterfront and glimpses of grebes and cormorants stirred a curiosity which had to remain unsatisfied. However, visits to the Kur un Gai National Park and a suburban park produced eleven new landbirds, including Laughing Kookaburras *Dacelo gigas*, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita*, Pied Currawongs *Strepera graculina*, a White-cheeked Honeyeater *Phylidonyris nigra*, Magpie-larks *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Galahs *Cacatua roseicapilla*, Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*, Maned Duck *Chenonetta jubatta* or White-eyed Duck *Aythya australis*, (I am not sure which), Dusky Moorhens *Gallinula tenebrosa* and a Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*. But the best of the bunch was an athletic Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* whose antics in pursuit of insects were a joy to watch.

**New Zealand.** Three weeks were spent with friends in Ashburton in the South Island of New Zealand. Our hosts were not really interested in birds but by the time we left they confessed conversion. The mouth of the Ashburton River showed me just how rich was the birdlife of this country. White-faced Herons *Ardea novaehollandiae* stalked the foreshore while many gulls, terns, cormorants and waders vied for my attention. I was able to identify only a few in the time available and these included Black-billed Gulls *L. bulleri*, a local race of Silver Gulls *L.n. scopulinus*, Dominican Gulls *L. dominicanus*, Black-fronted Terns *Sterna albistriata*, Black, Little and Spotted Shags *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *P. melanoleucos* and *unctatus*, South Island Pied Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus finschi*, Pied Stilt *Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus* and Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*. Not surprisingly I took the last to be Lapwings until I realised that they do not occur in New Zealand.

The first expedition into the foothills beyond the Canterbury Plain produced an exciting close-up of an Australian Harrier *Circus aeruginosus gouldi* and sightings of Paradise Shelduck *Tadorna variegata*. The former were so plentiful that future sightings of predators were usually greeted with a patronising 'Oh! just another Australian Harrier'.

Our host was, like me, an ardent angler and brief forays were made to the local rivers, Ahuriri, Rangitata and Waitiki, where I could not decide whether to concentrate on fishing or watch Black Stilts *H. novaeseelandiae* and Banded Dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus* and enjoy in the hot sun the heady scent of acres of rainbow-coloured lupins. Nevertheless, I managed to catch six beautiful wild Rainbow Trout, three of which exceeded 3.5lbs. I failed to find any Wrybills *Anarhynchus frontalis*, which would have made my day. How spoiled can one get!

I was promised a great treat on a visit to Lake Clearwater to see a rare grebe, which proved to be just a southern Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus australis*. I was much more interested in nearby Lake Roundabout which held families of Black Swans *Cygnus atratus* and New Zealand Scaup *Aythya novaeseelandiae*. What I took to be Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* on the surrounding grassland were in fact Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, another first for me. The towering, snow covered Southern Alps formed an imposing backdrop to the west.

A visit to Peel Forest was the nearest we got on foot to the aboriginal bush where Bellbirds *Anthornis melanura*, New Zealand Pigeons *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* and Pukeko *Porphyrio porphyrio* were 'twitched'.

The highlight of my stay in New Zealand was to be the unique Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora* colony at Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsula near Dunedin, but it was closed to the public at the time of our visit. We were assured, however, that if we had a coffee in the well-appointed Visitors' Centre some off-duty birds would soon appear. Sure enough, my first cup was but half drunk when the first came round the headland soaring close above us, to be followed by more in two's and three's. They were an unforgettable sight which was just as well for I subsequently lost the film on which I recorded this once in a lifetime phenomenon. Yellow-eyed Penguins *Megadyptes antipodes* were said to breed on the south shore of the peninsula at Pipikarath and to come ashore at dusk and we waited as long as possible to see this interesting event but their Twilight must be Astronomical for they did not appear.

A panoramic view of Taiaroa Head and about sixteen sitting Royals was obtained from Aramoana Point, where a group of roosting White-fronted Terns *Sterna striata* reluctantly moved aside for us to pass.

From our shoreside hotel in St. Clair, Dunedin, I was able to watch Australian Gannets *Morus serrator*, a Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*, Cape Pigeons *Daption capense* and the black form of the Variable Oystercatcher *H. unicolor*. Red-billed Gulls, the New Zealand version of the Australian Silver Gull, scrounged for food on the front, like the Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* at home.



Red-billed Gull

*Photo.* Peter Cunningham

On the shore at Queenstown it was, however, Black-billed Gulls *Larus bulleri* which snapped up unconsidered trifles at our feet. A short cruise on Lake Wakatipu on the TSS *Earnslaw*, said to be the only coal-fired passenger carrying vessel in the southern hemisphere, brought back memories of boyhood cruises on Clyde steamers in the thirties. From an underwater chamber under the wharf at Queenstown it was possible to watch New Zealand Scaup diving for food among shoals of huge Rainbows.

Another experience to which I had looked forward was the three and a half hour crossing of the Cook Strait from Picton to Wellington. Fluttering Shearwaters *Puffinus gavia* accompanied the MV *Aratika* through the spectacular Marlborough Sound, joined by a couple of Giant Petrels, many Dominican Gulls and Cape Pigeons when open water was reached. There were tantalizing sightings of unidentified albatrosses (or mollymawks) and distant views of prions *Pachyptila spp.* before berthing at Wellington all too soon.

**Hawaii.** We flew from Auckland to Honolulu, where a morning was spent in Kapiolani Park, watching Zebra Doves *Geopelia striata*, Red-crested Cardinals *Paroaria coronata*, House Finches *Carpodacus mexicanus*, Java Sparrows *Padda oryzivora* and a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. White Terns *Gygis alba* were also seen but my interest was centred on a lone plover near us which must have been a Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* on its enormous journey, for a land bird, from Alaska to, perhaps, New Zealand. Lunch was taken on the famous Waikiki Beach watching the well-heeled at play - and not a feathered bird in sight!

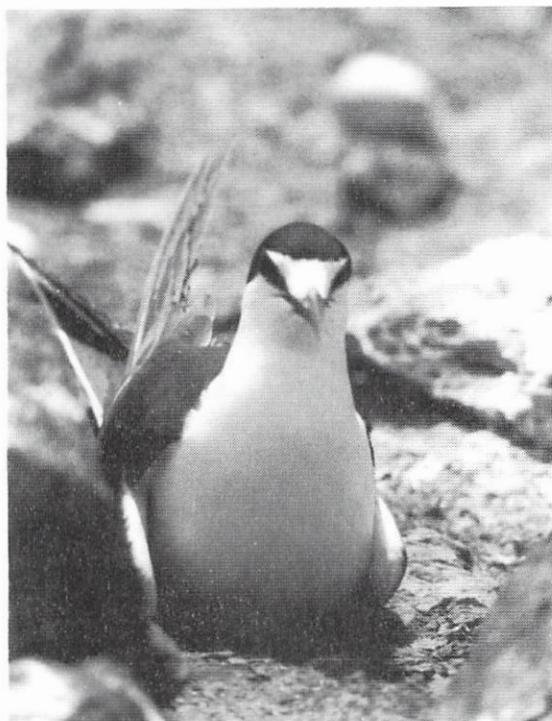
The afternoon was spent on a tour by bus of Oahu, a very rewarding trip with glimpses of a Spotted Dove, and many Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, American Coots *Fulica americana*, the local Moorhen *G.c. sandvicensis* and Black-necked Stilts *H. mexicanus* on the Amorient Aquafarm on the east coast. Off Turtle Bay a passing flock of seabirds was identified as Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula rubripes*.

My one regret was lack of time to see some of the indigenous birds of Hawaii, but that was the constant theme of our whole journey, wherever we landed.

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Sooty Tern, Ascension Island. March 1990

Photo: Petty Officer Martin Howells, RN  
(Winner of *Sea Swallow* Photographic Competition 1990)



Petrel caught and photographed 24 July 1991 at Selvagem Grande  
*Photo: Dr Francis Zino*

## DARK-RUMPED STORM-PETRELS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC

By Dr. W.R.P.Bourne

It has long been a source of relief to seabird-watchers in the North Atlantic that whereas other oceans contain many confusing uniformly dark, fork-tailed storm-petrels, at least theirs all normally had fairly white rumps. Then on 29 June 1983, while P.C.James and H.A.Robertson were conducting research into the voices of petrels breeding on the Salvages near Madeira, they heard a strange call which they traced to a small, all dark storm-petrel sitting in a nest (*Ardea* 73: 105-106). They identified it as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, and anyone who noticed said 'fancy that — how far will these birds wander next?' and thought no more about it.

Then, in the course of netting storm-petrels at Tynemouth, north-east England, M.P.Carruthers, M.G.Cubitt and L.Hall caught not just one but two more similar birds during the week 19-26 June 1989, and a third a year later (*Birding World* 2: 288-289, 3: 224-225), and yet another, as reported in the national press, on 31 July 1991 (see frontispiece page 1). There have been several sight-records of others elsewhere around north-west Europe, and I saw one myself at 23°N 18°W off West Africa on 20 January 1990. Dr. Frank Zino has also now photographed a similar species in the Salvage Is. (see photos). At sea it looks like a rather compact, brown Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* with a dark rump, and James and Robertson report that its voice is similar as well.

In point of fact, 'Swinhoe's Storm-petrel' is one of at least two dark allies of Leach's Storm-petrel already known to breed along the southern border of its range in the Pacific. The form *chapmani* breeding on islets off Baja California in the east intergrades with nominate *leucorhoa* to the north, so that there is little doubt that it is best treated as a race. But *monorhis*, which breeds around Japan and migrates to the Indian Ocean (*Ibis* 110: 27-34), is slightly more distinct, and it is still debatable whether it might be better treated as a separate species; this was doubtless the form reported as 'dark-rumped *leucorhoa*' from Sri Lanka in *Sea Swallow* 39: 66 last year and we have another record off Oman this year.

The photographs which have been published of the North Atlantic birds so far show that they have slightly paler primary shafts than other members of this group of petrels, and it seems not unlikely that they may belong to another distinct North Atlantic population. But because all those caught have been released it is still impossible to say quite how different they are. It is important to determine this since, if they are sufficiently distinct to be treated as a new species, it seems likely that there are only a small number of them (or else they would have been found before) which may be in need of protection. So if one comes on board please try to photograph it and save a primary (wing) feather before releasing it, or if it should die, the body.

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## SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, MN.

Thanks to the kindness of the Marine Department of the Meteorological Office, we have received various reports from the Met. Logbooks, together with some excellent photographs and sketches. This year there have been fewer unusual ones. Amongst reports received were the following:

MV *West Moor*, Captain D. Lloyd, had six Snowy Sheathbills *Chionis alba* on board in 51.2°S 56.7°W on 12 Apr '90, and two more next day at 43°S - presumably juveniles dispersing from their breeding grounds towards the Falklands and Patagonia. The second two seem rather far north. There was a report of this species between Cape Horn and the Falklands, last year.

MV *Jostelle*, Captain B. Longley, had a Sooty Tern, *Sterna fuscata* aboard in 30°S 39.9°E. An excellent sketch was included with the report. This species is common and widespread, but a very handsome bird, well worth seeing close to. There are several reports each year of this, and the closely related Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus*.

MV *Pacific Crane*, Captain P.G.H. Hodson, reported a flock of Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster* catching flying-fish in position 11.9°N 101.2°W, and asks if this is typical behaviour. I have certainly seen this many times leaving Panama, when a flock of Brown Boobies kept us company flying over and alongside the bow, and swooping down to catch them tail first. I think it fairly certain that some colonies of this species have learnt that ships put up flying-fish in this way.

MV *Snowflower*, Captain M. Baker, reported an oiled Guillemot *Uria aalge* aboard in the English Channel. It was subsequently caught and carefully cleaned with mild detergent, and then released. Mild detergent appears to be the best method to use, with the emphasis on mild, although I believe the bird's chance of survival depends much on whether it has swallowed any oil when preening. The bird did not leave the ship until halfway to the Azores, and concern was expressed as to whether it could survive so far from land. As these birds disperse well out into the Atlantic in the winter, I think that it had every hope of doing so, provided it had not lost too much of its natural waterproofing.

MV *Cardigan Bay*, Captain A.B. Leslie, reported a White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* on board in position 10.2°N 61.3°E. This is a species not often identified at sea, although I remember one coming aboard in the Atlantic. It breeds in the Atlantic, on Tenerife and the Salvage Is., and on islands off Australia and New Zealand. The Australian birds migrate into the Arabian Sea, where they moult, and presumably this is from where this specimen came.

MV *Pacific Swan*, Captain J.M. Miller, reported a small gull believed to be an immature Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* aboard halfway between Hawaii and California. The crew were surprised to see a gull so far from land, and fed it strips of cod and soaked bread, which it took readily. This species has been reported from Hawaii, so I believe this identification was probably correct.

Many thanks to all those who have included reports of birds in their Met. Logs.

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## THE CLASSIFICATION AND NOMENCLATURE OF SEABIRDS

By Dr. W.R.P. Bourne

Mariners are particularly exposed to one of the more tiresome hazards of ornithology, international variation in the names used for birds and the order in which they are listed. The problem is not usually severe with scientific names, which are governed by strict rules, but in a number of groups the vernacular names appear to have been devised in the Tower of Babel, and at regular intervals the sequence in which they appear in lists has also been stood upon its head, apparently often more as the result of a symbolic contest for dominance between the stronger personalities of the ornithological world than for any more rational reason.

For a long time this did not cause the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society much difficulty, since we had been provided with a good checklist of seabirds arranged in what long remained the most fashionable order in the first of all 'field guides', W.B. Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean* (Putnam, 1928), since the author had had a wide experience of popular usage for the birds' names in both Europe and Australia, and had also consulted the leading American authority of the day, R.C. Murphy. Captain G.S. Tuck subsequently also maintained this tradition in his *Field Guide to the Seabirds* (Collins, 1978), but unfortunately it now seems likely to be increasingly disturbed.

To start with basic considerations, until recently the classification of birds was largely based on the work of nineteenth century comparative anatomists. Unfortunately, while the comparison of their structure works well enough with the more closely related forms, it can be very misleading with more distantly related ones, which may diverge greatly in structure and appearance when they adopt different habits - for example, when the terns took to an aerial and the fairly closely related auks took to an aquatic way of life. Alternatively they may converge when they adopt similar habits, so that for example the apparently only remotely related Little Auks and Diving-petrels, which behave similarly in the northern and southern hemispheres, have become difficult to tell apart.

There has therefore been a continuing search for more independent evidence for relationships, such as the amount of difference between the birds' parasites (which unfortunately may move about from species to species), or their plumage and voice (which have unfortunately often become the means by which species tell each other apart so that they show as many differences as possible). Finally, research has concentrated on the basic fabric of the birds, their proteins, and especially the desoxyribonucleic acids (DNA) forming the genes which determine the rest of their structure.

By measuring the amount of difference between the DNA of different birds, Professor Charles Sibley and co-workers in North America have therefore now produced an interesting new hypothetical family tree for birds. Sibley and Burt Monroe have then gone on to provide a revised *Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world* (Yale University Press, 1990), so that it behoves anyone who is concerned about the nature of the new sequence and nomenclature that we are likely to be confronted with in future to scrutinise it rather carefully.

Table 1: Classification of Seabirds proposed by Sibley and Monroe.

- Class Aves (Subclass *Neoornithes*, Infraclass *Neoaves*)
  - Parvclass *Galloanserae* (Gamebirds and Wildfowl)
    - Order *Anseriformes*
      - Family *Anatidae* (Wildfowl).
  - Parvclass *Passerae* (Passerines, Raptors and Waterbirds)
    - Order *Gruiformes*
      - Family *Gruidae* (Cranes)
      - Family *Rallidae* (Rails)
    - Order *Ciconiiformes*
      - Family *Scolopacidae* (long-billed waders)
        - Subfamily *Tringinae* (Phalaropes and allies)
      - Family *Chionididae* (Sheathbills)
      - Family *Laridae*
        - Subfamily *Larinae*
          - Tribe *Stercorariini* (Skuas)
          - Tribe *Rhynchopini* (Skimmers)
          - Tribe *Larini* (Gulls)
          - Tribe *Sternini* (Terns)
        - Subfamily *Alcinae* (Auks)
      - Family *Phaethontidae* (Tropicbirds)
      - Family *Sulidae* (Gannets and Boobies)
      - Family *Phalacrocoracidae* (Cormorants and Shags)
      - Family *Pelecanidae* (Pelicans)
      - Family *Fregatidae* (Frigatebirds)
      - Family *Spheniscidae* (Penguins)
      - Family *Gaviidae* (Divers or Loons)
      - Family *Procellariidae* (Tubenoses)
        - Subfamily *Procellariinae* (Petrels and Diving-petrels)
        - Subfamily *Diomedeinae* (Albatrosses)
        - Subfamily *Hydrobatini* (Storm-petrels)

In the first place, starting with the higher classification, they propose a good deal of rather complicated reorganisation and lumping of current groups, so that whereas in the past waterbirds have been scattered all over the avian family tree, all except the wildfowl, rails and cranes (which do not really count as seabirds anyway) have now been combined with the storks and birds of prey into a single large order Ciconiiformes, within which two of the larger groups, the tubenoses, and especially the skuas, skimmers, gulls, terns and auks, have also been considerably lumped (though I think perhaps it will often still be found more convenient to treat them as separate groups).

Unfortunately it is rather difficult for the ordinary citizen who has not got advanced university degrees in both zoology and biochemistry, many years to spare, hundreds of thousands of dollars in research grants, and a magic box for analysing DNA, to assess all these proposals. So it is still necessary to fall back on the treatment of the lower groups where there is more alternative evidence available to evaluate the quality of the work. Unfortunately the authors do not seem to know much about seabirds, and as far as these are concerned the result seems rather a shambles.

Thus, instead of relying on established work such as the useful review of the tubenoses by Jouanin and Mouglin in the second edition of Vol. 1 of Peters' *Check-list of the Birds of the World*, they have tended to seize upon any untested recent proposals that they happen to have noticed, such as a recent review of the gadfly petrels of the genus *Pterodroma* by Imber (*Ibis* 127: 197-229, see my comment in *Ibis* 129: 404), while ignoring other at least equally useful pioneer work such as Devillers' review of the great skuas of the genus *Catharacta* (*Gerfaut* 68:374-417), which agrees considerably better with the alternative evidence. The result is a strange jumble of species with novel American 'English' names such as 'Common Black-headed Gull'.

The recent International Ornithological Congress in New Zealand, where Sibley was President, has now gone on to set up a working party under Monroe to agree upon more permanent 'English' vernacular names for all the birds of the world which seem likely to be based upon the classification and nomenclature used in their book for consideration at the next Congress in Vienna in 1994. It therefore behoves anyone who disagrees with it to consider what alternatives they prefer, and we would be interested to hear from anyone with views on the classification and nomenclature used for seabirds.

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**Editor's Note.** Meanwhile, and until the international debate has been finally resolved, RNBWS will continue to use the nomenclature used for many years in *Sea Swallow* - as in the annual seabird analyses - see pages 21-37 of this issue. **M.B.C.**

## THE RELICT GULL

By Dr. W.R.P.Bourne

The Relict or Mongolian Gull *Larus relictus* was first collected by K.G.Söderbom at Tsondol in Inner Mongolia on 24 April 1929, and long dismissed as some sort of freak. Its validity as a distinct species was eventually confirmed by the identification of two breeding colonies in Kazakhstan by E.M. Auezov in the late 1960s, and the available information has recently been reviewed by a number of authors in *Forktail* (4: 77-87, 6: 35-67). It appears to be a small ally of the Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyaetus*, which nests on lower ground than the fairly similar Brown-headed or Indian Black-headed Gull *L. brunnicephalus* north of Tibet, and may winter in the estuaries of the east coast of Asia between North Vietnam and Korea, where it has sometimes been confused with the Brown-headed Gull.

In appearance it is apparently a large, rather heavily-built, shy 'hooded' gull with a thick, blunt bill with a marked angle. The adult is fairly similar to that of the larger Great Black-headed Gull, with a larger, darker brown hood in summer than a Brown-headed Gull, (though the head may turn entirely white in the winter), a pale wing which has a small oblique dark bar across the tip, and the bill and legs dark red.

The immature also has a white head, streaking on the back of the neck, a dark leading edge and pale trailing edge to the wingtip, and dark markings on the median wing coverts, tertials, tips of the central tailfeathers with two distinctive white outer feathers, and dark bare parts. The chick has pale down like that of the Great Black-headed Gull.

There is a need for much more information about this and other *larids* occurring on the Chinese coast such as Saunders' or the Chinese Black-headed Gull *Larus saundersi* and the long-missing Chinese Crested Tern *Sterna bernsteini* (a name which has priority over *S. zimmermanni*), and anyone who gets the chance should take a good look at them.

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## REVIEWS

Robin W. Woods 1988. *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands*. Illustrated by Franklin Coombs. Anthony Nelson. Pp 256. ISBN 904614-22-0.

This is described as an expansion and revision of Robin Woods' 1975 book *The Birds of the Falkland Islands*. The latter work was a treasured companion during my first period of service in the islands in 1977-79, on detached surveying duties from HMS *Endurance*. It provided the best concise account of habitat, together with a species list, and a selection of photographs which conveyed the atmosphere of the archipelago very successfully. However, it was not a Field Guide, and whilst the plates in the American Geophysical Union *Birds of Antarctica and Sub-Antarctica* (1975) assisted in the identification of seabirds, there was no comparable volume for the South American mainland to help with landbirds.

The photographs, alas, have gone. But the excellent account of the environment remains to balance the description of species, which are now clearly laid out in contemporary standard Field Guide format. This detailed reference work should certainly not be confused with its immediate predecessor from the Woods stable, the small pocket guide which appeared fortuitously during the 1982 campaign, and which became the mainstay for observers from the expanding garrison.

The style of the plates in this book is distinctive, with the good bold colours which are familiar in Dr. C.J.F. Coombs' contribution to the *Handbook of Birds of Europe, Middle East and North Africa*. Generally the passerines are the most successful, and the illustrations will resolve the identification of most of the attractive landbird population. However there are gaps eg. immatures, such as those of the Striated Caracara. The 'jizz' of some of the seabird paintings is not quite as convincing, especially the *Procellariiformes*. Members are advised to keep their Peter Harrison volumes alongside this work.

The updated text reflects the extensive observations and studies since 1975, most of which are described in the Introduction. The author pays tribute to RNBWS, and specifically identifies the importance of the fieldwork of Dr. Bill Bourne and Senior Radio Officer Bill Curtis RFA. Colonel Bill Stanford's ABWS publication of 1989 illustrates that Robin Woods' hope that this volume will allow field observers to increase published knowledge is already being fulfilled. Any RNBWS member venturing 'south' should certainly have a copy.

M.K.B.

McNamee, I. 1990. Seabirds of Biscay - 90. Pp. 52. SEBA, West Lodge, Puddington, South Wirral L64 5ST, UK.

A report on birds and cetaceans seen by more than 50 birdwatchers during 22 trips between Plymouth, England, and Santander, Spain, between May and October 1990. The observations are analysed in a number of different ways, presumably by computer, but lack precision over times and positions and substantiating details for such things as four Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro* reported off Brittany on 12 Sep and several of the rarer terns. It would also have been interesting to see the weather map when at least 153 landbirds of 22 species including 2 Magpies and 12 House Sparrows occurred with clear weather and light east winds on 13 Sep.

W.R.P.B.

Nature Conservancy Council 1990. *Seabird distribution west of Britain* Pp 282. ISBN 0-86139-676-6. *Vulnerable concentrations of marine birds west of Britain*. Pp 45. ISBN 0-86139-675-8. Dept. SBD, Nature Conservancy Council, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

These publications comprise part of the product of phase 3 of the Seabirds at Sea research project, which has been in progress in UK waters since 1979. This phase covered the Irish Sea and coastal and offshore waters of the West of Scotland. The research team, which again included RNBWS member Mark Tasker, have produced another comprehensive but clear report, in the format of their earlier work on the status of birds in the North Sea.

These books are highly recommended to members, not just because they provide a model of sound fieldwork and subsequent analysis. The introductory discussion of the environment should be of particular interest to RN members, since it underlines the importance of birdlife as an oceanographic feature of great operational significance. The team's views on survey methods are of value to members whose observations may be confined to a regular area of operations, rather than a single passage.

It is good to see a number of RN and MN ships among the list of platforms for the team, and acknowledgement of observation records from several RNBWS members. This highly professional result of scientific study and scholarship, exploiting modern aids to statistical work, shows what can be achieved when government funding is made available to monitor the environment. I believe that it is important that we, who have the privilege of filling in the large gaps in coverage from vessels of opportunity, study the NCC methods, and learn what we can from them.

## UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OF PEREGRINE FALCONS IN THE WESTERN ATLANTIC.

by Chief Officer Martin G. Weir, MN.

The following incident occurred during the period 27 Sep - 1 Oct '90, whilst on passage from New York, via Norfolk Va, to Charleston S.C.; the route between ports was about 20nm offshore. When about half-way between New York and Norfolk, 38nm SE Barnegat inlet at 1700(L), a single adult male Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, was seen flying around the ship, and finally settled on the foremast just before dusk. The vessel arrived in Norfolk at 2300.

The falcon was not seen whilst in port, but reappeared on sailing at 1500 on 28 Sep. It again roosted on the foremast. At daylight on 29th, an adult female joined, and both roosted on the foremast. They left occasionally to delight the crew, and also the pilot who was a keen birder, with spectacular tumbling flight displays, until arrival at Charleston, at about 1600 that afternoon.

On leaving Charleston at 1700 on 30th, both birds again rejoined the ship, this time accompanied by an immature male. The adults were identified as the same individuals, by a missing primary on the left wing of the male, and a gap in the tail of the female. All three roosted for'ard as dusk fell.

At daylight on 1 October, the three falcons were still aboard, and a small flock of unidentified warblers, possibly Yellowthroats *Geothlypis trichas*, appeared. The Peregrines had an early breakfast, each taking one warbler, and then both adults were seen departing south at 1940(L), when 40nm SE Cape Hatteras. The young male left shortly afterwards, also heading south. The ship's course at the time was 050° at 18 kts, wind mainly N'yly force 1-3, visibility about 6nm.

Chief Officer M.G. Weir, MN., 62 Lauriston Farm Road, Edinburgh, EH4 5EZ.

## TAILPIECE

### Trans-Atlantic stowaways, from UK to Brazil

The following remarkable story was reported in the Met. Log. of RRS *Bransfield*:

Two Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were first sighted aboard in the English Channel on 19 Oct '90. A few days later they appeared on the bridge wings, and appeared very bold in their search for food, hopping through the bridge, and rummaging in bins and ash-trays. One made itself unpopular by hopping through wet paint, and spreading it all over the bridge controls and telephone handsets. They were given watered milk and bread-crumbs, but found over the next few days they could do better outside the 'gash' room, and the poop deck. They appeared to rest in a coil of mooring-rope on the poop, and were seen most days flying around the decks.

Despite passing within a couple of miles of the Canary Is., they did not depart, and were still alive on arrival in Rio de Janeiro on 7 November, where they are believed to have gone ashore and settled.

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**Falklands:** Ian Strange, The Dolphins, Port Stanley.

**Australia:** Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, 4 Willora Road, Eden Hills, Adelaide, South Australia 5050. (Tel: Adelaide 3702212), or Mr A.E.F. Rogers, 26 Westleigh Drive, Westleigh, Sydney, N.S.W., 2120.

**U.S.A.:** Dr R.G. Wolk, Ph.D., North Carolina Museum of National History, P.O. Box 27647 Raleigh, North Carolina 27611.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*; authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate, together with figures and diagrams. Those with facilities to do so, are encouraged to send on diskette (3.5" preferred), in ASCII format, together with a print-out.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **1st March**.

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