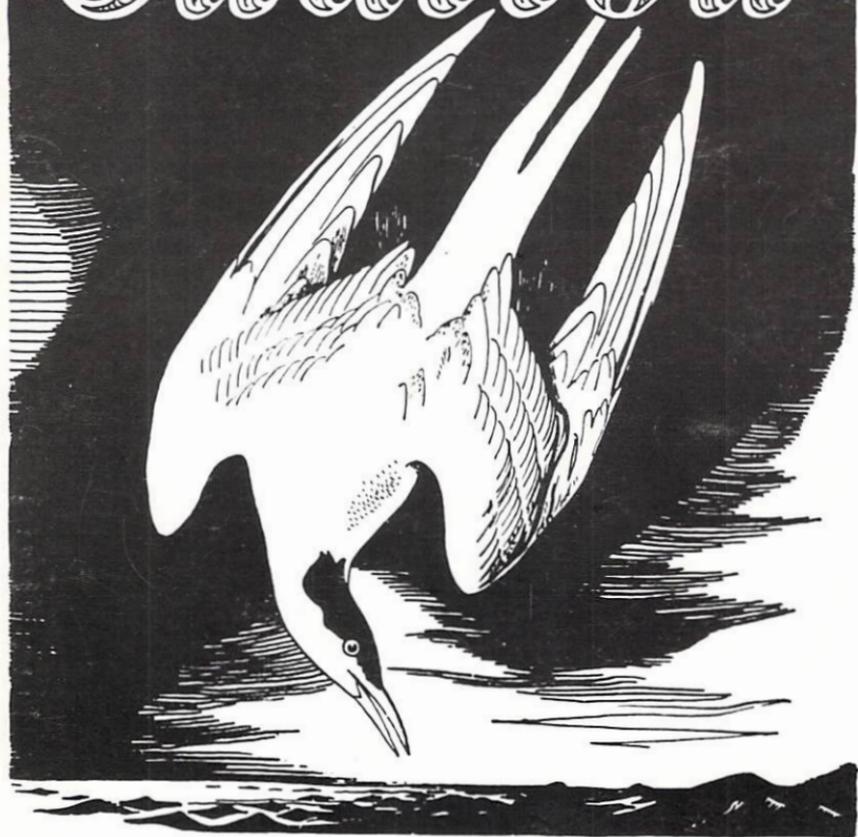


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# *the* Sea Swallow



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

PUBLISHED 1988

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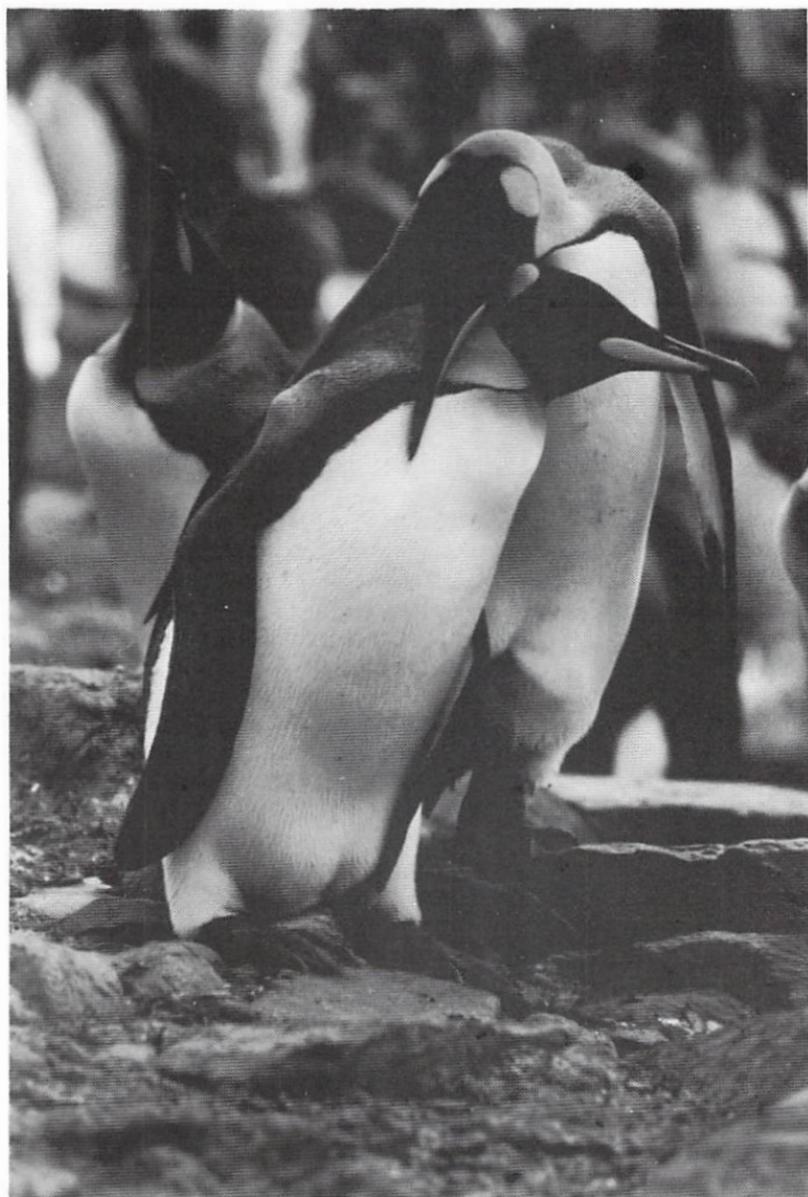
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King Penguins *Aptenoides patagonica*, South Georgia  
Photo: Surgeon Lieutenant M. M. Parrish, R.N.  
Winner of *Sea Swallow* Photographic Prize 1987

## EDITORIAL

The annual struggle to produce this journal on time and within budget gets no easier: communication problems and the operational commitments of key contributors have been further aggravated this year by the postal strike during the crucial final stages.

Sadly missing from this volume is the annual analysis of seabird reports received from members being prepared this year by Dr. W.R.P. (Bill) Bourne. He was unable to complete the task in time due to being sent out at short notice for duty in the Gulf with the Armilla Patrol aboard R.F.A. *Tidespring* and his analysis will therefore appear next year. Other casualties are Stephen Chapman's regular feature of new and unusual seabird records summarised from recent literature, and the President's Foreword.

On the other hand, several new names appear for the first time, together with an encouraging number of regular contributors who have again been busy with binoculars, notebooks and cameras. Readers will, I hope, find much of interest within these pages, and some fortunate enough to be at sea will be stimulated to keep a sharper lookout for Abbott's Boobies in the Indian Ocean, and for the numerous birds of interest on passing through Japanese waters. We would especially welcome more reports and photographs from these areas.

Behind the scenes there has been much discussion with our sister birdwatching organisations in the Army (ABWS) and Royal Air Force (RAFOS) who have offered places for RNBWS members to participate in their expeditions to Belize and Ascension. If these plans bear fruit, I hope others will be encouraged to take part in future expeditions, and that I shall be able to include something of the results achieved in *Sea Swallow* 38. I have already received a report from H.M.Y. *Britannia* covering the recent visit, with our Patron embarked, to the Galapagos Islands.

To the many who have contributed this year, many thanks, and please keep your reports and draft material flowing in — the earlier the better please — see "instructions to authors" inside the rear cover.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

## HIGHLIGHTS OF A SOUTH ATLANTIC TOUR - 1986/87

By Radio Officer W.F. Curtis M.B.O.U.

R.F.A. *Sir Lancelot* was on station in the Falkland Islands from late October 1986 until late April 1987. Very little time was spent at sea in the vicinity of the Falklands except for regular voyages between Port Stanley and East Cove. At least once during each month a voyage was undertaken to South Georgia in support of the garrison there. A single voyage to Fox Bay in March was the only visit to West Falkland. Despite this limited time at sea several notable records were reported, off both the Falklands and South Georgia. These are summarised here, together with comments and references to earlier voyages, where considered relevant, in particular those undertaken on R.F.A. *Sir Bedivere* between February and August 1986.

**Penguins.** A single Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes fosteri* was seen at close range on 13 January 1987 about ten miles to the east of Fitzroy, this being the third record for the Falklands. There have been few records away from the Antarctic continent, the majority being from South Georgia, though three birds were reported by Rumboll and Jehl (1977) on 15 September 1975 at 40° 30'S 54° 34'W, some 1,300 miles to the east of the Falklands. With the exception of the first record for the Falklands, at Pebble Island in 1936, all have been of immature birds.

Two King Penguins *A. patagonicus* were seen at 52° 56'S 40° 44'W on 14 March 1987, approximately half-way between the Falklands and South Georgia. As with the previous species, records at sea away from the breeding colonies are few, though two were also recorded on 11 May 1984 about 150 miles northeast of the Falklands.



Gentoo Penguins *Pygoscelis papua*, South Georgia

Photo: Surgeon Lieutenant M. M. Parrish, R.N.

**Albatrosses.** Large numbers of Royal Albatrosses *Diomedea epomophora* were recorded on several occasions, either over the continental shelf or along the edges of this shelf. These concentrations were particularly obvious to the east of Port Stanley, where 92 were counted on 26 February 1987, and along the southern entrance to the Falkland Sound where there were 81 on 28 March. The area along the edge of the shelf to the east of Port Stanley produced many records because this was the only place in transit to and from South Georgia where the 100 fathom line was crossed on a regular basis. Smaller numbers were recorded regularly in 1986 along the northern coast of East Falklands, whilst during both 1986 and 1987 numbers between one and four were seen on all transits along the east coast from Port Stanley to East Cove. Very little time was spent off West Falkland, though it is considered that concentrations of birds would also be likely between Cape Meredith and Beaver Island where the same conditions exist; prevailing onshore winds, onshore ocean currents and the proximity of an irregular 100 fathom line causing upwelling in this area. Whenever possible birds were identified as to race, with the result that there appeared to be a distinctly higher proportion of the northern race *D.e. sanfordi*, off the east and north coast, whereas to the south of Falkland Sound there were nearly equal numbers of *sanfordi* and nominate *epomophora*.

Murphy (1936) in his *Oceanic Birds of South America*, agreed with a report by R. Dabbene that the Royal Albatross was the more common of the two "great" albatrosses in the southwestern Atlantic Ocean, a view also supported by Robertson and Kinsky (1972), whilst Jehl (1974), in three voyages along the shelf off Argentina, thought that Wandering Albatrosses *D. exulans* outnumbered Royal Albatrosses by about five to one. He did, however, find that out of a total of 145 birds only one was showing the brown plumage of a juvenile Wanderer. He concluded that the Wanderers in this area were at least four years old.

During a total of 96 hours of watches kept during 1986 and 1987 over the shallower waters of the shelf, 413 Royal Albatrosses were identified, against some 18 Wandering Albatrosses, whereas only nine Royals were recorded during a similar number of hours spent in the open ocean. However, both Wanderers and Royals were seen well inside Port William Sound on 15 April 1987.

With the experience gained by the number of Royal Albatrosses seen during these two years I now feel that a record of 18 Wandering Albatrosses reported some nine miles off Cape Dolphin on 14 May 1984 (W.F. Curtis, *in litt*) was probably erroneous. These birds were part of a group of 73 "great" albatrosses sitting on the sea in calm conditions, and identified as Wanderers due to the fact that I considered that at the range seen the dark tomium line of a Royal Albatross would have been visible. With the luxury of hindsight I now consider that this criteria is not truly valid; I have found this dark line along the cutting edge of the bill not always easy to see. This record should therefore be treated as simply "73 great albatrosses". Away from the Falkland Islands, two birds of the nominate race were recorded in position 39° 52'S 38° 56'W on 30 April 1987.



Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*,  
West coast of New Island, Falklands

Photo: Lieutenant Commander J. Rainbow, R.N., H.M.S. *Sentinel*

On 28 March 1987 three Buller's Albatrosses *D. bulleri* were sighted at the southern entrance to the Falkland Sound; this was the first record of this species for the Atlantic Ocean, and is dealt with elsewhere (see Short Note on page 62 of this issue). Seen with them were five Shy Albatrosses *D. cauta*. Small numbers of this species have been reported from the Falklands annually since the first in 1984, following the first record of the subspecies *D.c. salvini* at South Georgia in 1982. It has long been suggested that this species, which winters off southwestern Africa, may reach that area via Cape Horn rather than travelling westwards from New Zealand.

**Shearwaters.** An extremely large concentration of Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* was also seen on 28 March 1987 in the vicinity of Fox Bay. This "flock" was initially detected on radar at approximately six miles, and was estimated to contain about 80,000 birds. During the two days the vessel was at Fox Bay they were observed both visually and on radar; they were seen to remain within three to six miles of Fox Bay, invariably in a compact flock covering about one square mile, occasionally feeding, though most of the time was spent sitting on the sea. The only known breeding colony of this species in the Falklands is in the northeast at Kidney Island, which is estimated to contain some 5,000 to 7,000 pairs, though there is no doubt that other smaller breeding colonies do exist. Birds were seen on several occasions in 1986 flying towards George Island and Low Island at dusk. Some of the smaller islands off the west and south coasts may also be worth investigating, but it seems likely that most birds originated in the large breeding grounds in southern South America.

In the late evening of 15 January 1987 three Sooty Shearwaters were observed flying around the entrance to Cumberland East Bay, South Georgia. They were finally lost to view, as darkness fell, flying into the bay in the direction of the Nordenskjold Glacier. At 0645 on 17th, five birds were also observed in the vicinity of the Barff Peninsula, though on this occasion they did not enter Cumberland Bay and were last seen flying out to sea. This is the first record of Sooty Shearwaters close inshore in South Georgia, though there is an unusual record of 18 birds seen 25 miles to the north of the island on 14 June 1982 (W.F. Curtis, *in litt*). Two more birds were also seen four miles off Busen Point on 9 April 1987.

Four Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus* were recorded flying rapidly northwards off Choiseul Sound, Falkland Islands, on 17 February 1987, these being the first record for the islands. This species winters regularly off the coasts of Brazil, Uruguay and northern Argentina, with records as far south as 49° 30' by Cooke and Mills (1972) in January. (There is also an unpublished record off Cape Horn)

**Petrels.** A single Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris* was seen flying round the vessel whilst at anchor off Prince Olaf Harbour, South Georgia on 9 April 1987, adding to the growing number of April records of this species close inshore around this island. Two also came aboard a survey vessel at the Bay of Isles on 7 April 1974 (Prince and Payne, 1979), four on board another vessel at anchor at Elsehul between 8 and 12 April 1977 (Jehl, Todd, Rumbold and Schwartz, 1978), with a further two reported off Bird Island on 10 April 1981 (Prince and Croxall, 1983). A single bird was observed dispersing with breeding petrels near Willis Island on 3 November 1983 (W.R.P. Bourne *in litt*). It may yet be found to breed on South Georgia in small numbers, though during April it has also been found to be widespread south of that island and the Falklands.

Black-bellied Storm-Petrels *Fregatta tropica* were seen in the lights of the vessel after dark whilst anchored off King Edward Point, South Georgia during the night of 26 January 1987. Occasional birds were seen here in 1986, and Prince and Croxall (1983) reported that the species has been found breeding in this area. On all passages along the coast between Grytviken and Stromness during the summer they were quite common, especially in the vicinity of Busen Point, whilst in 1986 large numbers were seen at the anchorages off Stromness, Husvik and Leith Harbours. In 1986 many birds came aboard, dazzled by the deck lights during evenings when light snow was falling, or the night was still and misty. It would appear that there are further breeding colonies along this stretch of the coast.

**Skuas.** On 17 February 1987, the same day as the Manx Shearwaters were observed, two pale phased adult Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* were also seen flying north in the same location. This constitutes the second record of this species for the Falkland Islands, the first being reported near Port Stanley on 15 May 1982.

Three single immature Long-tailed Skuas *S. longicaudus* were recorded flying steadily southwards over a period of an hour on the morning of 23 March 1987, approximately 75 miles to the east of Port Stanley, following four days of storm force southwesterly winds. A single bird had previously been seen near Port Stanley on 11 November 1982, and three near Volunteer Point on 29 November, and Veit (1985) reported birds over the continental shelf to the northeast during January 1985.

South Polar Skuas *Catharacta maccormicki* were occasionally reported from the Falkland Islands, and between there and South Georgia. There was an influx into the Falklands during the latter days of March, with at least 14 reported from Choiseul Sound on the 30th, and 12 on 31st. Most of these were easily identified as they were in the pale phase, and there may have been further dark phased birds amongst the more distant Great Skuas *C. skua*, of which there were at least 100 on both days.

**Terns.** Some 500 South American Terns *Sterna hirundinacea* were also present on the 30th, together with about 20 other terns which could have been Antarctic *S. vittata*, or possibly Arctic *S. paradisaea*, being slightly smaller and darker on the upperparts than the local birds, some of the nearer birds showing reddish bills. All were in winter plumage. Antarctic Terns tend to remain in the vicinity of their breeding grounds during the winter, although there are records from the coasts of South Africa and South America. The numbers in Cumberland Bay, South Georgia, certainly decrease during the winter months.

**Landbirds.** There was also an influx of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* into the Falkland Islands after the breeding season, though not as large as in 1986. On two occasions birds were recorded on board the vessel during voyages from the Falklands to South Georgia. Two were carried all the way, 6-7 April, and one was seen again aboard at Prince Olaf Harbour on 10th, though neither was seen whilst at Grytviken on 8th. This is the first definite record of a passage to South Georgia by this species aboard a ship, though it is clearly also quite capable of reaching the island unassisted.

On 9 April, a single male Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca* was also discovered near the cemetery at Prince Olaf Harbour. This had not been observed aboard during the voyage and seems likely to have reached the island unassisted. Either way, it constitutes the first record for South Georgia.

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## BIRD MEMORIES OF ALMIRANTE, PANAMA

By Captain R.L. Westwater M.N.

Arriving at dawn, one disturbs the Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* that have been roosting on the buoys, and the Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* come out to greet us, or give the ship the once over in case we have brought along anything interesting; the forward whistle is always a great attraction, and some go in to check it out.

Approaching the Bocas, the Brown Pelicans *Pelecanus occidentalis* fly across the bow in their line ahead formation, allowing nothing to hurry or upset them. Inside the lagoon Magnificent Frigatebirds *Fregata magnificens* are soaring overhead, their great "scissor-tails" cutting the air as they alter course. It was here that I first saw a touch of red on the breast of a male. The pilot tells me that on nearby Man-o'-War Cay they find dead frigatebirds hanging by their necks in forks of trees. The local theory is that they have taken their lives due to food being scarce!?

Many terns are busy feeding inshore, probably Royal Terns *Sterna maxima*. I have seen them close to the berth with their broad white forehead and large orange bill. Rounding the last cay, with the berth ahead, one can see numerous Black Vultures *Coragyps atratus* hanging in the sky, and others festoon some trees - a meal near at hand?

As one finally approaches the berth, the Grackles *Quiscalus mexicanus* arrive on board to see what they can find in the way of moths, or anything which takes their fancy. These birds have found that large



Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Photo: Captain J. W. Gurton, M.N.

numbers of moths are attracted by the ship's lights at night and can provide a very substantial breakfast. So if one is interested in moths one has to be up bright and early or all to be found will be the left-overs, wings scattered far and wide.

Overhead there is a continuous aerial display by Barn and Rough-winged Swallows *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* which is a delight to watch.

Behind the wharf are four houses with gardens and a number of coconut palms, the crowns of which are level with the window on my ship (M.V. *Irma M*), and are a source of interesting birdwatching. They, and the parakeets, were there when I made my first trip to Almirante in 1964. During the afternoon they are visited by the grackles, the odd Black Vulture will rest awhile, and Tropical Kingbirds *Tyrannus melancholicus* dash forth after their prey. A Berlepsch's Pigeon *Columba berlepschi*, with its nice reddish colour, is rather special.

The evening is the highlight of the day, when the Finsch's Parakeets *Aratinga finschi* come to roost. They are not very large, but the racket they make has to be heard to be believed; they are the usual green, and have a red forehead and "wrist", but the underwing is a lovely yellow with a semicircle of red at the "wrist". They make as much noise in the morning as they do late at night, so people living in the houses below must never have any difficulty waking up. It is a wonder the parakeets have survived so long! They leave in batches, and have usually all gone by 0900. Then more visitors arrive: White-ringed Flycatcher *Cor-*



Coconut Palms — roosting site of the Finsch's Parakeets, Almirante  
Photo: R. L. Westwater, M.N.

*yphoticus albobittatus*, small with bright yellow underparts, Palm Tanager *Thraupis palmarum*, Derby Flycatcher *Pitangus sulphuratus* and the small Bananaquit *Coereba mexicana*. After "breakfast" the grackles return to the trees for a wash and brush up.

Then we are on our way again, and as we leave we find the buoy occupied by Olivaceous Cormorants *Phalacrocorax olivaceus*. Will there be anything new to see when we return in 28 days time? The pilot tells me that Almirante is on the flight path of the migrating birds, and this goes on for hours at a time. This could take place when we get back, and I shall live in hope.

Useful references:

*Seabirds an identification guide*. Peter Harrison  
*A Field Guide to the Birds*. Roger Tory Peterson  
*Birds of Mexico and Central America*. L. Irby Davis.

Captain R.L. Westwater M.N., 15 Barbary Lane, Ferring, West Sussex BN12 5JB.



The two main currents affecting Japan are the Black and the Kurile currents. The former, a warm current, sweeps northeast along the southern part of the archipelago, part of it flowing into the sea of Japan as the Tsushima Current, while the main body of water flows along the Pacific coast heading out into the North Pacific between 35° and 40°N. The Kurile Current is cold and flows south down the Pacific coast of Japan. The region where these two currents meet is rich in plankton and one of the best fishing grounds in the world, and as a consequence it has abundant seabirds. The Tokyo-Hokkaido ferries pass through this region, and this is the main reason why this ferry route is so consistently good throughout the year.

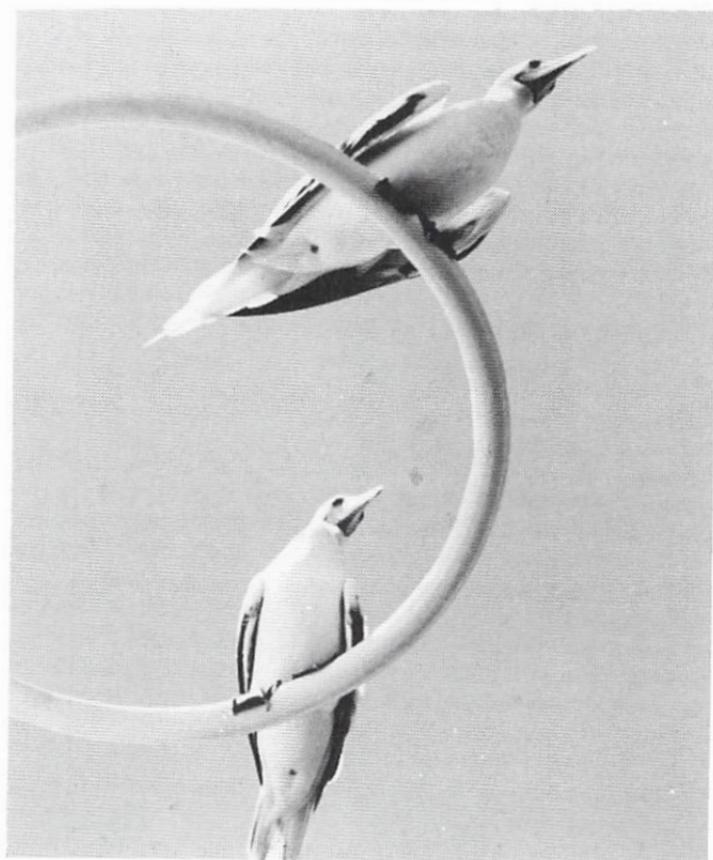
Such diversity of climate and, as a consequence, of habitat in a single small country is astonishing. The result is that in addition to a number of exciting seabird species endemic to Japan and the far east, such as the Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*, Matsudaira's Petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*, Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*, Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo* and Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*, Japan also harbours northern breeding species at their southern most point in the western Pacific such as the Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*, Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus* and Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata* the ranges of which just include southeastern Hokkaido. Conversely, certain southern species such



Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis*, North Pacific, January 1987  
Photo: Radio Officer G. Shaw aboard M.V. *Wellington Star*

as the Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*, Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, occur at their northerly outpost in the Nansei Shoto and Ogasawara Shoto.

In winter, once all the southern breeders have left, the southern seas are almost devoid of birdlife, but at the same time of year sea-ice drifting down the Okhotsk Sea reaches the northern Hokkaido coast, breaks up off the Shiretoko peninsula, and spills down the Nemuro channel bringing with it abundant seaduck and seabirds, and, incidentally, two species of sea-eagles *Haliaeetus sp.* Winter is the time to see large numbers of gulls, auks, auklets and murrelets. Crested *Aethia cristatella* and Least Auklet *A. pusilla* are the most abundant with Common *Uria aalge* and Brunnich's Guillemot *U. lomvia* both common. Smaller numbers of several other species occur, occasionally including a rarity or two such as a Whiskered *Aethia pygmaea* or Parakeet Auklet *Aethia psittacula*, or Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*.



Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula* on look-out for flying fish, April 1987  
west of Aldabra Island, S. Indian Ocean

Photo: Captain S. Mayl, M.N.

At least 40 species of seabird breed regularly or have bred, and all together more than 100 species have been recorded from Japan, contributing almost one fifth of the country's avifauna and making Japan's waters some of the finest in the world for seawatching. And, whereas in so many parts of the world seawatching must be done into the teeth or at least the aftermath of a gale in the hope that unusual species might be blown closer to land, or during specially arranged pelagic trips, in Japan very little effort is necessary. Seawatching in Japan can be done from the sheltered decks of the many ferries that connect virtually all the islands on an almost daily basis.

## JAPAN'S FERRY ROUTES

Ferries range down both the Japan Sea coast and the Pacific coast virtually all the way from Hokkaido to Taiwan and pass through excellent seabird areas. During eight years associated with Japan, and six of them resident there, I travelled most of these routes and several of them frequently. Four routes stand out as particularly worthy of note. Top of the list at any season comes the route between Tokyo and Hokkaido — either to Tomakomai in the west or Kushiro in the east. In second place, because of its convenience for visitors to Japan with little free time, is the trip to the Izu Shichito particularly Miyake-jima and Hachijo-jima; this trip provides a taster of what can be seen on the much longer journey. Third best is the route to the Ogasawara Shoto or Bonin Islands 1,000 km south of Tokyo out into the Pacific. My fourth choice, which only comes last because of the additional time required to do it justice, is the island-hopping route from Kyushu to Okinawa and eventually to Iriomote-jima; this route provides a very different variety of species from the previous three.

Wherever one travels in Japan it is worth considering the ferries as a cheap, comfortable, and interesting alternative to planes and trains, and as a way of combining a long leisurely journey with some exciting seabirds. But the four routes I have highlighted are so good as to be worth planning a trip around, and certainly no birding visitor to Japan should leave without taking either the Izu Islands ferry or better still the Hokkaido ferry. The Pacific coast routes have many more birds or more species than those of the Japan Sea Coast. However the latter provide a cheap way of travelling and birdwatching between western Honshu and Hokkaido, and given the number of seabird rarities which keep turning up on the coast of Niigata Prefecture they must also have the potential to produce some interesting species.

### *1. The route between Tokyo and Hokkaido (see map)*

The routes north to Hokkaido I have made many times in every month of the year and have found them to provide consistently the very best seawatching in Japan. The schedules of the northbound boats are perfect, leaving late in the evening from Tokyo, so that two nights are spent on board with the whole of the intervening day and the final early morning before docking available for seawatching in good waters. The southbound boats are less convenient since they depart at lunch time,

only one night is spent on board and Tokyo is reached in the early evening. The first afternoon is thus spent crossing the interesting Tsugaru Strait but much of the second day is spent steaming through the dull waters of Tokyo Bay. Where time is of the essence I always take the ferry north and fly south.

The best areas are off the coast of Chiba Prefecture and the Rikuchu coast of Iwate Prefecture which the boat passes on the first morning and late in the first afternoon, on the northbound route, then off the coast of Hokkaido on the second morning. Even though I have travelled on the northern ferry routes many times I have found no two boat trips to be the same, and in each month a different species seems to predominate.

In late spring and early summer, there are Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* by the thousand. Throughout the summer there are the most exciting of seabirds, the albatrosses. The two common species are Black-footed *Diomedea nigripes* and Laysan *D. immutabilis*, and very rarely the endangered Short-tailed Albatross *D. albatrus* can be seen. Band-rumped Petrels *Oceanodroma castro* are common, there are also small numbers of Tristram's *O. tristrami* and Swinhoe's Petrels *O. monorhis*, and Leach's Petrel *O. leucorhoa* are abundant off Kushiro in late summer. At all seasons, except mid-winter, there are tens of thousands of Streaked Shearwaters *Calonectris leucomelas*, and from spring to autumn other species join them. Sooty *Puffinus griseus* and particularly Short-tailed Shearwaters *P. tenuirostris* occur in huge numbers and amongst them are usually smaller numbers of Flesh-footed Shearwaters *P. carneipes*. Very small numbers of these species can also be found throughout the winter up to the latitude of Chiba, and occasionally beyond.

At most times of the year there are gulls and Northern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. Fork-tailed Petrels *Oceanodroma furcata* are reasonably regular in late summer and autumn, and in winter it is the kittiwakes, gulls, auks, auklets, and murrelets that are most abundant. At any season there is always the chance of an unusual species, perhaps a *Pterodroma* petrel in late summer, or a White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Red-legged Kittiwake *Rissa brevirostris*, Parakeet Auklet, or Horned Puffin in winter.

Blakiston's Line, which passes through the Tsugaru Strait separating Hokkaido from Honshu delimits the distribution of many plants and animals including landbirds. Many seabirds particularly sea ducks and the auks, although not strictly limited by it, are commoner on one side of the line than on the other. The Northern Fulmar is a good example: in winter it is much commoner around Hokkaido than off northern Honshu, although as if to underline that few generalizations about birds are safe, on one autumn trip I found it common even as far south as Chiba. The Streaked Shearwater shows the opposite pattern; it is very uncommon around Hokkaido but abundant off Honshu. Sea ducks, especially scoters and Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, are to be seen only as one nears Hokkaido in winter, and in summer Spectacled Guillemot and Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata* occur there.

On this northern route a number of species are likely to be encountered at any season of the year, although in seasonally variable numbers, such as Laysan Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Streaked Shearwater, Temminck's *Phalacrocorax capillatus* and Pelagic Cormorant *P. pelagicus*, Red-necked Phalarope, Pomarine *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Arctic *S. parasiticus* and South Polar Skua *S. maccormicki*, Black-tailed Herring *Larus argentatus*, and Slaty-backed Gull *L. schistisagus*, Spectacled Guillemot and Japanese Murrelet. From May to October there are also likely to be Black-footed Albatross, Flesh-footed, Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Leach's, Swinhoe's, Band-rumped, and Tristram's Petrels, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and Rhinoceros Auklet. During winter and spring, that is from November to April or May, one may encounter Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Diver, Harlequin *Histrionicus histrionicus* and Long-tailed Duck, Common *Melanitta nigri* and Velvet Scoter *M. fusca*, Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Common *Larus canus*, Glaucous-winged *L. glaucescens*, and Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Common and Brunnich's Guillemot, Marbled and Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*, Crested and Least Auklet. Rarities by virtue of their status are very unlikely to be seen by anyone making a single voyage, but the likelihood of something unusual is greater between November and May on this route. Short-tailed Albatross, Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*, Stejneger's Petrel *P. longirostris*, Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*, Fork-tailed Petrel, Red-legged Kittiwake, Pigeon Guillemot, Parakeet Auklet and Horned Puffin should all be looked for.

## 2. Tokyo to Izu Shichito

If Hokkaido seems either too far or too northerly, then I can recommend the Izu Shichito or Seven Islands of Izu. A visit to these islands makes an excellent side trip from Tokyo for the ardent sea watcher and provides a tantalizing taster of what can be found from the boat to the Bonin Islands. A late night ferry goes first to Miyake-jima arriving there at dawn when the seas are teeming with hundreds of thousands of Streaked Shearwaters from the several million strong colony on Mikura-jima a little further south. From Miyake-jima the boat carries on, passing Mikura-jima, to Hachijo-jima then back to Miyake-jima by about mid-day. This return section to Hachijo-jima and the first three hours out from Miyake-jima on the journey back to Tokyo are best for sea-watching especially for Japanese Murrelet which breeds on Sanbondake, a group of islets to the southwest of Miyake-jima, and Tristram's Petrel, which sometimes occur in quite large numbers. In spring there are skuas; Pomarine are the commonest as elsewhere in Japanese waters, but South Polar, Arctic and Long-tailed also occur. There are phalaropes, Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses, and Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters in spring and summer. In winter, Great Crested *Podiceps cristatus* and Red-necked Grebes *P. grisegena*, various gulls and murrelets are all present at sea here. The Izu Islands themselves should also not be missed as they are home to the endemic Izu Islands Thrush *Turdus celaenops* and Ijima's Warbler *Phylloscopus ijimae*.

### 3. Tokyo to Ogasawara Shoto

The small group of sub-tropical islands, the Ogasawara Shoto (Bonin Islands), 1,000 km south of Tokyo, form part of a long chain of islands which stretches in a line through the Izu Islands right down to the Iwo or Volcano islands. For those with more time to spare — a week is essential — this trip too should not be missed. Being so far south and so far out in the Pacific, tropical seabirds are common. In fact the surrounding seas have an abundance of seabirds to be found nowhere else in Japan except around some of the uninhabited islands in the southern Nansei Shoto, and where else can one so easily take a pelagic trip so far out into a major ocean?

Probably the most difficult to see of all the Japanese seabirds is the Short-tailed Albatross, but the best chance is from the boat to Ogasawara Shoto in winter. By the morning following departure from Tokyo the 'Ogasawara Maru' is already south of Torishima, where the species' main breeding grounds are. So for a chance of seeing one, get up early to start seawatching at first light. Both Laysan and Black-footed Albatross breed on Muko-jima in winter, and many can be seen from the ferry during this season. In summer Wedge-tailed Shearwater and Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* are common around the islands, Matsudaira's Petrel follow the boat north of Chichi-jima, and between Chichi-jima and Haha-jima both Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* and Bonin Petrel are relatively easy to see and also more Bulwer's and Matsudaira's Petrels. The resident Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* is common around Haha-jima, where there is a breeding colony just off the southern cape, and visitors should also find Brown Noddy and, if lucky, perhaps a Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*, Red-footed *Sula sula* or Masked Booby *S. dactylatra*, Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* or a Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. Initially the seabirds are the same as on the voyage to Miyake-jima, with chances of Japanese Murrelet again near the Izu Islands, but gradually the Streaked Shearwaters and Tristram's Petrels are replaced by Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Matsudaira's Petrels as one moves south from the Izu Islands towards the Ogasawara Shoto. It is in this southern region that there is the greatest potential for finding rarer seabirds, particularly shearwaters and *Pterodroma* petrels. On my first visit to the islands I found both Black Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* (Brazil 1987) and White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma externa* (Brazil 1988), both of which were first records for the islands. The Ogasawara Shoto is also worth visiting at any time of the year for its endemic landbirds, particularly the endemic Bonin Islands Honeyeater *Apalapteron familiare* on Haha-jima. July however, is particularly good for seabirds.

The 'Ogasawara Maru' departs for Ogasawara at 2200 and takes 30 hours to the main island of the group, most popular with tourists and least interesting from a bird-watching point of view. From Chichi-jima the 'Haha-jima Maru' takes 2 hours 20 minutes to Haha-jima. If you really have plenty of time and enjoy sea-watching there is a slower cargo boat the 'Kyosho Maru' which takes 50 hours to Chichi-jima and four hours to Haha-jima. It is also cheaper than the regular ferry.

#### 4. Amami-oshima to Ishigaki jima and Iriomote-jima

The Nansei Shoto, or southwestern islands of Japan, Japan's finger in the tropical pie, have several tropical seabird colonies, although unfortunately most are on inaccessible offshore islets. The commercial ferries that connect the major islands thus provide the best opportunity to see a wide variety of these species including petrels, shearwaters, boobies, terns and noddies, that cannot be seen elsewhere in the country except from the ferry to Ogasawara. For these birds the boat from Okinawa to Ishigaki-jima via Miyako-jima, and the slow boat between Ishigaki-jima and Iriomote-jima are best.

As with the route to Ogasawara this journey is most productive in summer, when the further south one travels the chances of seeing Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern and Brown Noddy, Masked Booby and Red-tailed Tropicbird are greater. Short-tailed Albatrosses are now known to have re-colonised the Senkaku Islands to the southwest of the Okinawa so there is even the possibility of bumping into one of these birds. The weekly boat from Okinawa via Ishigaki-jima to Keelung in northeast Taiwan is also interesting for seabirds.

The ferry from Amami-oshima to Okinawa leaves at night giving one early morning sea-watching from just north of Okinawa. The ferry in the reverse direction from Okinawa north to Amami-oshima leaves early in the morning and goes via Yoron-jima and Okinoerabu-jima arriving at Amami-oshima after dark. The ferry from Okinawa to Ishigaki-jima leaves in the evening and calls in at Miyako-jima early in the morning, the section from Miyako-jima to Ishigaki-jima takes about five hours and is all in daylight. From Ishigaki-jima several boats run regularly to Iriomote-jima, and this is the best section for the southern terns. Care should be taken to catch the slowest of these, which takes two hours, since passengers are allowed out on deck and have time to birdwatch, as opposed to catching a speedy hydrofoil with no outside access. Terns and Bulwer's Petrels are most in evidence during the summer; both Roseate *Sterna dougallii* and Black-naped Tern can be seen commonly close to shore while the petrels are commoner out to sea. The shearwater and skua migrations occur between March and June, and from September to November, thus boat journeys at these times are particularly profitable.

From Spring to Autumn, Streaked, Short-tailed, Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Bulwer's and Swinhoe's Petrels, Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas, Brown Booby, Eastern Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*, Greater Crested *Sterna bergii*, Roseate, Black-naped, Little *S. albifrons*, Bridled, and Sooty Terns, and Brown Noddy may all be seen on these routes, while much rarer species are also possible near the Yaeyama Islands, such as Red-tailed Tropicbird, Masked Booby and Audubon's Shearwater.

Since ferry time-tables vary annually and seasonally it is essential to check with a travel agent for exact schedules. Except for the Okinawa to Taiwan ferry, however, most operate on a daily, or near daily basis.

The sea mammals of Japanese waters also deserve attention during a seabird trip and indeed it is hard to avoid watching the Northern Fur

Seals *Cailorhinus ursinus* lolling at the surface in groups of up to a dozen along the main ferry routes from late autumn to late spring and early summer, and the Harbour *Phoca vitulina*, Kurile *P. kurilensis* and Ribbon Seals *P. fasciata* closer to shore. Furthermore the winter sea ice usually brings fairly large numbers of the huge Steller's Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubata*. Cetaceans once abundant off Japan are rarely sighted from the ferries although Pacific White-sided Dolphins *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens* at least are common, and from the Bonin Islands the larger species are more likely.

## CONCLUSION

The position of Japan is a unique one; it straddles climatic regions ranging from the sub-arctic to the sub-tropic, and it is comprised of a large series of islands the majority of which are connected by commercial ferries. The variety of seabirds to be seen as a result is enormous and yet at the same time seawatching at sea requires no special arrangements. Consequently Japan can boast some of the easiest and finest seabird watching in the world.

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For further information on shipping companies, schedules and where to stay in the various islands read:

*A Birdwatcher's Guide to Japan* by Mark Brazil, published by Kodansha International and the Wild Bird Society of Japan, and distributed in the U.K. by Harper & Row Ltd.

Dr. M. A. Brazil: The Hawk Trust, Zoological Society of London, Regents Park, London NW1 4RY.

## NORTHWARD HILL NOTES - A BIRDMAN'S HOLIDAY

By Chief Officer Martin C. Littlewood, M.N.I., M.N.

I recently spent some time as a voluntary unpaid warden on a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (R.S.P.B.) reserve. This came about as, in common with most seagoing personnel, I had missed the family holiday. Needing a break from the list of jobs to be done around the house, which had been drawn up in my absence, I looked at the adverts in the magazines. However I thought it wiser not to mention any exotic tropical birdwatching holidays to the rest of the family! Then, in the small print at the back of one of them, the R.S.P.B. advert caught my eye.

A few of the reserves employ voluntary wardens (known as "vols"), all year round, while others for the summer season only. Accommodation is free, and can vary from basic i.e. a caravan with a chemical toilet and no facilities, to the comparative luxury of a cottage with hot running water. Cooking facilities and utensils are provided, as are mattresses. One brings one's own food, sleeping bag and clothing.

I was assigned to the reserve at Northward Hill, Kent, which was the first choice on my list. Following the map provided I drove down a farm track to the cottage, which lay in a group of isolated buildings on farmland about a mile from the reserve. On the door a note greeted me "Back at lunchtime, find yourself an empty bed". The other two sharing the cottage arrived back for a late lunch after a morning out with the warden counting birds. By this time I had unpacked my kit and had a "brew up".

The 134 acres of the reserve are sited on a hill overlooking the Thames estuary, and the habitat consists mainly of deciduous woodland of ash, oak and maple, with dense areas of elm and hawthorn. The best known feature is the heronry, being one of the largest in Britain with about 220 pairs of Grey Herons. These nested in the elms until they were destroyed by Dutch Elm disease in the early '70's, but have now moved to the oak woodland.

There is also a rookery with about 200 nests, and the site houses one of the largest crow roosts in Kent. Many common woodland birds such as Common and Lesser Whitethroats, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, and both Greater and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers breed regularly. In winter, Merlins and Sparrowhawks frequently hunt in the roosts, and Goldcrests are often seen as autumn migrants.

There is of course always some work to do, but hours were flexible to suit both the weather and any unusual birds rumoured to be in the area. I was there during early autumn, and the habitat management was directed mainly at mowing some of the large areas of meadow, and cutting and thinning the dense blocks of elm and hawthorn. This may at first seem a little drastic, but the blocks are cut in rotation, so several years elapse between each cutting and this allows light into the otherwise dark and gloomy undergrowth. The light favours the growth of plants which are more valuable for bird and insect life.

Careful records are maintained of all wildlife on the reserve in order to monitor the effectiveness of the management. There is a long species list of butterflies, the most notable being the White-letter Hairstreak for which Northward Hill is the premier site in Britain. This lays its eggs on the elms, and the caterpillar feeds on the bramble which grows in the areas which have been cleared of the dense cover.

On some evenings the resident warden drove us out to his favourite birding haunts, and this proved to be a good way to acquire local knowledge. Other times were spent studying the Long-eared Owl roost in the reserve; these breed in one hawthorn bush, but roost for the rest of the year in another. If the weather conditions were suitable, an ultra-violet moth trap was set up, but the identifications were left to the assistant warden, who was by far the most expert in this field.

Not long before my visit, the R.S.P.B. had been asked to manage Nor Marsh, a saltmarsh habitat in the Medway. Before any work could be done, complete surveys had to be made of the fauna and flora. This was now in progress and I found it to be the most interesting aspect of my stay, even though the hour-long boat journey seemed a little like a busman's holiday. A botanist was taken out at regular intervals to plot the plantlife, and to check for rare species.

Bird counts were made at various states of the tide because, being very low-lying, the height of water had a dramatic effect on the area of the marsh. The most common birds were waders such as Turnstone, with peak numbers of about 800, Grey Plover in similar numbers, and a slightly smaller population of Ringed Plover and Redshank. A few Whimbrel were also present, and a navigational mark acted as a roost for about 20 Cormorants.

Quite a number of Little Terns were seen on each visit, and the possibility of setting aside an area for them to breed was discussed. No firm commitment was made, because a long-term management document had first to be drawn up. Further information was also required from other reserves which already had successful breeding colonies of terns, to see how the lessons could be applied here. The Management Plan, together with the surveys, ensures that accidental ecological disasters are avoided, and it provides a vital baseline from which to judge the progress of work being carried out. The document also aids a smooth transition, should the warden be transferred to another reserve.

Some free time is given to allow for one's own birdwatching. No specialist knowledge or skills are required, but any that are applicable will be put to good use. I can recommend this type of break to anyone, and would like to thank those at Northward Hill for making my stay such an enjoyable one. On leaving, I wished that I could have stayed longer, but that list of jobs had not grown any shorter....

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# ABBOTT'S BOOBY AND CHRISTMAS ISLAND

By Dr. J.B. Nelson

## INTRODUCTION

Until twenty years ago, Abbott's Booby *Sula abbotti* was, despite its size, conspicuousness and diurnal, non-burrowing nesting habits, a practically unknown seabird so far as numbers, breeding biology and distribution at sea were concerned. Even the plumage characteristics of the immature bird were matters more for artistic (or otherwise) imagination, although this was not admitted in the identification guides in which it featured. This obscurity was due to its interesting but frustrating habit of nesting in the high canopy of the rain-forest of the Indian Ocean Christmas Island, to which it is entirely restricted as a breeding bird.

Since 1967, during which my wife and I spent seven months working on Abbott's Boobies, a great deal has happened (Nelson 1971, 1978, 1986, Powell and Tranter 1980, Ovington, Cullen and Nelson 1981, Nelson and Powell 1986, and Reville, Tranter and Yorkston 1987).

## HISTORICAL RESUME

The little that was known about Abbott's Booby since it was first collected by W. L. Abbott in 1892 on Assumption Island was due mainly to the remarkable efforts of the late C. A. Gibson-Hill, a medical doctor on the island and a remarkable naturalist. He showed (Gibson-Hill 1947, 1950) that Abbott's Booby was largely confined to certain parts of the island, no mean demonstration in the days when it was almost entirely covered by trackless rain-forest, and also provided the first, albeit highly approximate estimate of the number of breeding pairs. My 1967 work showed that Abbott's Booby had an unusual breeding cycle which required some 500 days from the adults' arrival on the island in April, until the departure of their offspring in July/August or later of the subsequent year. The dependent, but free-flying juvenile has to sit out the monsoon months (Nov - March) on the island. We also provided the first map of the breeding distribution of Abbott's Booby, information which was to be essential in the conservation battles that lay ahead.

In 1974 the phosphate mining company (British Phosphate Commissioners as it then was) created a conservation post in response to the concerns voiced at first by me, and then later by the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Science, Technology and the Environment. David Powell, until then their senior surveyor, and possessing unrivalled knowledge of the island, was transferred to this post. For the next eight years he worked on Abbott's Booby, providing for the first time a realistic estimate of the total breeding population. Also, by dogged and prolonged field-work, he obtained many of the ecological parameters needed for understanding its population dynamics. Shortly after his appointment the first government Conservator (Don Merton of New Zealand) was sent to the island under the joint aegis of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the New Zealand Wildlife Service.



Adult Abbott's Booby with six-week old chick

*Photo: J. B. Nelson*

Then, in 1980, the Christmas Island National Park, covering 12% of the island in the unspoilt S.W. corner was declared. Unfortunately it did not contain nearly enough Abbott's Boobies to safeguard the species. Following a two-year survey and report by Powell and Tranter, a panel of three (myself and Professors J.M. Cullen and D. Ovington) made detailed recommendations to the Australian Government about reconciling conservation and mining practice. These guidelines were accepted, and as a result, jungle clearing in sensitive areas was greatly reduced or stopped. The next, enormously important, step was the appointment of a three-man research team (Reville, Tranter and Yorkston, under the direction of the first-named) to study Abbott's Booby in relation to mining, and to work for six years (1983-89) funded by the Australian Government and the Mining Company.

Finally, after a wearisome series of government investigations and reports on the viability of mining, operations officially ceased in December 1987. The next step will be to decide the nature of future activities on the island. Already there are moves to resuscitate mining, but if the Government abides by its declared intent to prohibit any further clearing of rain-forest, this should entail merely the working of fields which have already been partially exploited. The island is so rich in wildlife that, ideally, it should all be a National Park.

### The Breeding Biology of Abbott's Booby...

I will not repeat in any detail the findings reported in Nelson & Powell (1986). These confirmed that Abbott's Booby is highly conservative in its distribution on the island, and has not significantly altered its boundaries as a result of the removal of some 30% of the forest, much of it in its favoured areas. Naturally, this has meant an increased density of nesting birds in the areas surrounding clearings (see below). Powell's eight-year study, although unfortunately without the benefit of marked birds, enabled us to calculate that Abbott's Booby has one of the lowest productivities of any seabird. Some pairs raised no, or only one young in eight years, and the average productivity was only 0.196 young per pair per year. This is partly because they lay only one egg in two years (though around 20% lay two eggs in three years) and only 10%-30% of eggs produce an independent young bird. Furthermore, in any year, up to one fifth of the potential breeders take 'rest years' in which they do not attempt to reproduce. We calculated (Nelson & Powell 1986) that it takes a pair of Abbott's Boobies about 24 years to replace themselves. The important causes of death among the young are failure to survive the critical period immediately after hatching, a common time of death in many seabirds, starvation as a free-flying but dependent youngster during the monsoon period (when it is still tied to the island), and destruction by cyclones whilst it is still sitting in the nesting tree. Fortunately most of the adults are at sea during the monsoon period and do not suffer on the same scale as the juveniles.



Pair of Abbott's "mutual nest-building", an activity which reinforces the pair bond

*Photo: J. B. Nelson*



Pair of Abbott's Boobies with chick 70ft up in the jungle canopy

*Photo: J. B. Nelson*

From this brief outline it will be clear that the adults are highly non-expendable. If a breeding pair is destroyed, the odds are that it will not by then have replaced itself. It is likely that none of their previous young will themselves be breeding and, due to the extremely high mortality in the pre-breeding years, especially in the first year of life, there is a strong probability that none will be in the pipeline as immatures. Unless the destroyed adults are aged 24 years or more, their demise will reduce the size of the breeding population. As that is already small, its reduction will, under certain circumstances, lower its future viability. The circumstances are - firstly, that the population was not, at the time of reduction, up against some sort of ceiling set by a resource such as food or available nest-sites, and secondly, that the population is liable to environmental pressures which can destroy a large proportion of its output, perhaps in several successive years, together with, maybe, some breeding birds. Abbott's Booby is highly unlikely to be up against a

resource ceiling (ie. it is not density-dependently controlled). In the first case, the population of Abbott's is far too small and its foraging range is too great for its food to be affected by its numbers (unlike, for instance the comparably small population of the Flightless Cormorant *Nannophtherum harrisi* of the Galapagos). It is more difficult to be certain about the supply of nest-sites since we are only just beginning to discover which features affect their viability. But even within that part of the island used by Abbott's Boobies, their density is so low and the numbers of sites so great, that a shortage of suitable ones does not seem in the least probable. Abbott's Booby is therefore most unlikely to be density-dependently controlled, and therefore the removal of breeding adults will not increase the productivity of the remainder. It has, in other words, no 'bounce-back' capability.

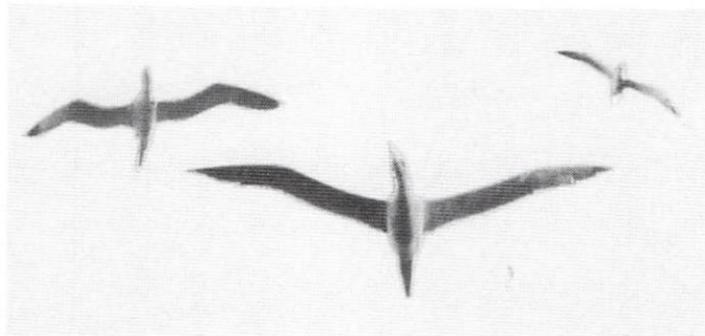
In the second case, Abbott's Booby is certainly subject to severe losses from cyclones in some years. Fledglings are blown out of trees and either killed or damaged, or left to die on the jungle floor. As an extreme example, if there are, say, ten pairs and a cyclone blows down 30% of the adults and 50% of their young, there remain only seven pairs and a reduced number of recruits from that year. Several individuals could then be lost fortuitously in other ways, including at sea, before the next breeding season. With a thousand pairs, on the other hand, the same catastrophes would leave a much larger absolute number, which would be more capable of withstanding further natural disasters. A very small population might be unable to produce enough recruits to buffer a series of blows. It is impossible to say what would be the smallest viable population, but the obvious and sensible approach is to protect the whole of this already small population from further depletion by man. Since I wrote these words there has been a major storm on Christmas Island (27 March 1988), which has destroyed much jungle and, in the areas since investigated, almost half of the juveniles from the 1987 laying (Reville, *pers. comm.*).

These points relate to one of the principal discoveries of the Research Team. It was recognised that the conflict between mining and this small, vulnerable population could endanger its very survival rather than merely reducing its numbers. We needed to know more about long-term breeding statistics and, in particular, how the breeding biology of Abbott's Booby in undisturbed habitat differed from that in habitat disturbed by mining. Many breed near to cleared areas, where these are in its preferred parts of the island, and these birds, it was thought, may be less productive than those breeding in unbroken stretches of jungle. This is a point which I made repeatedly in the days when the mining company insisted that plenty of habitat remained. For instance, due to the large gaps in the canopy, their offspring may be more likely to be grounded during their first flight, and adults may be more vulnerable to attack by frigatebirds, which soar in the thermals above bare ground. Also, the displacement of birds which occurred when their habitat was destroyed meant that new sites had to be found, and probably also new mates. This could result in the loss of one or more breeding seasons, and as a consequence, a reduction in lifetime productivity. The preservation of enough optimal

habitat could thus be essential for the long-term viability of Abbott's Booby, and is a key issue which at times has been ignored. In the mid-70's there was an attempt to institute a policy of 'selective clearing' in which the trees to be cleared were first surveyed for nesting boobies, and those which were occupied were left standing until the nesting attempt had been completed. This saved adults and chicks, which, appallingly during a former period were sacrificed, but it did not preserve habitat.

The Research Team has established that Abbott's Boobies are more likely to abandon their nest-sites if these lie near to a clearing in the jungle, than if they are situated in an unbroken tract. Within 300m of a clearing, less than 60% of sites occupied in 1979/80 were still in use in 1983/84, whereas for sites in areas more than 1,800m from any clearing, the figure was 92% (Reville, Tranter and Yorkston 1987). This implies that nesting even 300m away from a clearing has disadvantages; there is some evidence that the effect may persist far beyond 300m. But what could these effects be? The team's approach to their study has been to process through a computer large numbers of suitably structured observations. This enables the investigation of many variables, and has led to the discovery that the highest rate of abandonment occurs in areas within 300m to the north-west of a clearing (i.e. within a semi-circle  $225^{\circ}$  -  $045^{\circ}$ ). Nests to the NW of clearings have, moreover, a lower breeding success than those to the SE; this could be why more of the former are abandoned. It is suspected that the clearings exacerbate the wind disturbance of the forest canopy to the NW and that this increased canopy disturbance physically dislodges some young; the SE trades are the prevailing winds from April to November, which is the period when Abbott's Boobies build and lay, and when the young mainly grow.

The most worrying aspect of this highly significant discovery, as these researchers point out, is that more than half of the breeding population nest within 300m to the NW of clearings. If their productivity is reduced, the long-term effects will be serious. Over the three-year monitoring period, when these findings emerged, breeding success to the NW of clearings had been 13% below what might have been expected (*loc.cit.*).



Abbott's Boobies — three flight silhouettes showing "Concorde-like jizz"

### Abbott's Booby at sea.

There are fewer than 2,000 breeding pairs of Abbott's Boobies in existence, and a considerable proportion of these abstain from breeding for various periods during their breeding lives. These conclusions may seem largely irrelevant to the life of Abbott's Booby at sea, which is the main concern of readers of *Sea Swallow*, but it may engender further interest in this rare and beautiful seabird, and encourage mariners to look out for it with greater awareness. It has been recorded extremely infrequently, even in the area of the SE Indian Ocean where it is most likely to occur. A single observation only is noted in *Sea Swallow*: a report from H.M.Y. *Britannia* in 1956, *Sea Swallow* 10:14. This is probably due, in part, because of difficulty in identification. Its Concorde-like 'jizz', and noticeably long upper-arm part of the wing is, however, extremely distinctive, whilst the combination of black wings (upper surface), white back with slight mottling (as also on the thighs) and black tail are diagnostic. It would be of great interest to know more about its distribution in the Indian Ocean, especially in the central (Chagos Archipelago) and western areas.

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## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

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

The following landbird report sheets were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials.

Third Officer A.R. Louch, M.N. - R.R.S. *Discovery* - South Indian Ocean, 18 Jan 1987 and R.R.S. *Charles Darwin* - Arabian Sea and N. Indian Ocean - 28 Sep-20 Oct 1987.

Chief Officer P.C. Dyer, M.N. - M.V. *Shetland Service* - 7-24 April, 26 May-7 Jun 1987 - Central North Sea.

Second Officer B. Grandin, Swedish M.N. - M.V. *Falstaff* - Med. Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and S. China Sea.

Chief Officer M.G. Weir, M.N. - M.V. *Canmar Venture* - 16 May-17 Aug 1987 - Atlantic and Med.

P.W. Jackson, M.N. - M.V. *Liverpool Star* - N. Atlantic, Med - 12 Mar-1 May 1987.

Captain J.W. Welch, M.N. - M.V. *Strathconon* - W. Atlantic 23-25 Apr 1987.

Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood, M.N. - M.T. *London Spirit* - Several voyages Atlantic, Caribbean, Med - 31 Mar-11 Aug 1987.

Lt. Cdr F.J. Aitken, R.N. - H.M.S. *Beaver* - 28 Apr-8 May 1987. NE Atlantic - 2 pages.

Chief Petty Officer I.M. Calderwood R.N. - H.M. Submarines. - NE. Atlantic, Norwegian Sea and North Sea - 22 Apr-5 Sep 1987.

Captain R.L. Westwater, M.N. - M.V. *Irma M.* - Atlantic - Oct 1987.

Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz, German M.N. - M.V. *Condi Helvetia* - Med and Indian Ocean - July 1987.

Captain N.G. Cheshire, M.N. - R.V. *Franklin* - Pacific - Oct-Nov 1987.

Captain J.W. Gurton, M.N. - M.V. *Petersfield* - E.Pacific - Aug-Sep 1987.

Once again I have been kept busy with a spate of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs, thanks to the sterling efforts of Captain M.L.M. Coombs of the Met. Office, Bracknell, and Captain Peter Chilman who handles the seabird records from this valuable source. The analysis is presented in the same geographical Sections A to J as in previous years. Extracts from Met. Logs are indicated by the notation (Met).

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

1986

Mr Grindley (*pers comm*) Chief Engineer of M.V. *Fort Vale* described the unusual behaviour of a bird he identified as a swift first seen on 26 July, clinging to the outside of his cabin window in position 50°00N 13°15'W, some 300nm from Lands End. On being opened, the bird entered and was caught and subsequently placed on an armchair where it remained overnight. Mr Grindley released it at about 0900 next day, but an hour later it returned and re-entered the same window to perch again on the armchair, where it remained until about noon on 28th. It then became agitated, and when offered the window it subsequently departed. (COMMENT. A swallow or martin would seem more likely than a swift, but whatever it was, it was probably a rather confused juvenile; its behaviour does seem very odd. M.B.C.).

On 12 Jan M.V. *Atlantic Conveyer* (Met) recorded two probable Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* aboard in position 500nm W. Ireland; the wind had been easterly force 8/9 for two days.

PWJ recorded two Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* aboard 100nm SW Scillies on 12 Mar, and when 20nm off the coast of Portugal on 1 May, noted a probable Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*.

A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was reported aboard M.V. *Lackenby* (Met) on 23 Mar in position 46°35'N 27°03'W. It remained 1130-1700 using the foremast as a perch from which it was seen to catch at least two storm-petrels.

MCL recorded a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp. on board on 31 Mar in position 06° 50'S 10° 34'E, 120nm SW mouth of R. Congo, and on 8 Apr a group of 11 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* was seen flying westerly in position 6° 12'N 11° 36'W, 35nm SW Liberia.

On 9 Apr MCL saw a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* heading north when 90nm SW Portuguese Guinea, 10° 36'N 17° 41'W.

M.V. *Churchill* (Met) reported a prob. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* which landed aboard at dawn on 23 Apr in position 26°46'N 20°38'W, 150nm SW Canary Is. and 330nm NW Spanish Sahara. It remained all day but disappeared the following night. A Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was found newly dead on 26th in position 07°37'N 28°46'W, 540nm SW Portuguese Guinea.

On 27 Apr IMC recorded 20 Dunlin *Calidris alpina* flying past NW, and a Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima* which landed briefing on the S/M casing in position 58°N 6°W ("the minches", 10nm SE Hebrides). On 28th a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* flew past heading north in position 60°N 5°W, 70nm NW Orkneys.

During the period 28-29 Apr FJA recorded a single Swallow on 28th and 29th, and an unidentified wader, possibly a sandpiper *Tringa* sp. seen flying NE in an area 220nm west of Ireland (54°45'N 15°W), and on 6 Jun a Merlin *Falco columbarius* 120nm east of Faeroes (61°30'N 3°08'W). On 7 May he saw a Whimbrel 80nm NW Shetland.

On 6 May M.V. *West Moor* (Met) recorded a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* when 100nm W. Lisbon, Portugal. On 16 May a probable. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* flew past heading S. in position 14°20'N 17°56'W, 40nm SW C. Verde, Senegal.

During the period 7-8 May FJA was operating in an area about 150nm WNW Lofoten Is. and recorded two Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, two single Swallows, a group of three Whimbrels, an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and a Dunlin in breeding plumage.

On 16 May MGW recorded two Fan-tailed Warblers *Cisticola juncidis* aboard briefly while at anchor off Cadiz.

On 19 May IMC recorded three Whimbrel which circled four times and departed north and also a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* which flew past heading north. The position was 45nm north of N. Norwegian coast (71°N 20°E) and the wind W/force 5, misty.

On 4 Jun a Turtle Dove *Sireptopelia turtur* and a Swallow came into the wheelhouse of M.V. *Menellus* (Met) in position 23°N 17°20'W, 80nm west of Spanish Sahara.

On 5 Jun MCL recorded a House Martin *Delichon urbica* aboard in an exhausted state in position 35°13'N 23°48'W, 95nm NW Azores. It was caught and allowed to rest overnight in a bathroom, and released next day; it was seen to head off in a direction 080°.

On 15 Jun IMC recorded a Purple Sandpiper flying NE in position 67°N 80E, 120nm W. Norway.

Further late House Martins (5) were seen in the Bay of Biscay (55nm NW C. Ortegale) on 23 Jun by MCL, together with a Turtle Dove; weather was overcast, wind ENE/3, vis. poor. A Common Swift *Apus apus* was seen aboard on 21 Jul in heavy overcast conditions in position 12°39'N 22°55'W, 140nm south C. Verde Is. It was found dead about a week later.

On 21 Aug M.V. *Apapa Palm* (Met) recorded a solitary Barn Swallow in position 29°48'N 15°26'W (90nm NE Canaries), which overtook the ship without pausing, heading south. The wind was NNE/5. On 23 Aug, when 90nm SW C. Blanco, several birds were aboard including swallows, martins, two doves (prob. Turtle Doves, an unidentified warbler and a Hoopoe *Upupa epops*).

A female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* flew close alongside F.P.V. *Clione* (Met) 60nm west of Ireland on 3 Sep, heading SE.

On 19 Sep M.V. *Churchill* (Met) recorded a number of landbirds aboard in position 150nm west of Lisbon including seven Turtle Doves and three *flava* wagtails.

BG recorded a newly dead Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* on 27 Sep when 30nm off Vigo, Portugal.

A Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was recorded aboard a merchant ship (Met) on 2 Dec in position 2°05'N 27°46'W, 130nm NNE St. Paul's Rocks.

On 10 Dec M.V. *Speedstar Universal* (Met) photographed a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp. aboard in position 36°N 15°W.

M.V. *Golden Fleece* (Met) reported an unidentified falcon (possibly a Merlin) on 22 Oct in position 23°18'N 31°28'W chasing a small bird; feathers were also found on deck. This was 450nm from the nearest land, and 750nm W. of mainland (C. Blanco).

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

1986

During the night of 12/13 Oct M.V. *Aberdeen*, (Met) anchored off the River Humber, was invaded by a mass of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. Numbers were estimated between 300-600, and most remained overnight.

In the Baltic, M.V. *Baltic Eagle* (Met) reported a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* three miles south of Tutstess (Sweden) on 13 May, and on 8 Dec 40 probable Grey Lag Geese *Anser anser* flying SE in position 54°27'N 12°14'E.

1987

On 6 Jan a Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* landed aboard SSV *Seagair* (Met) near the Magnus Platform, northeast of the Shetlands. It was rescued and helicoptered ashore to Aberdeen where it was placed in the care of the RSPCA. It had been seen circling the vessel the previous afternoon, and was thought to have been caught in the easterly storm on 4th.

PCD recorded the following species during the period 7-23 Apr whilst operating in the Fulmar/Auk field (56° 30'N 02° 09'E), 145nm NE Whitby, Yorkshire:

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* 7th and 22nd.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* 7th (3), 9th (3), 10th (500+ which circled the flare for an hour before dispersing eastwards in small groups - winds were WSW force 4/5).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* one on 7th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* one on 9th swimming close to vessel, and another which alighted briefly on board on 10th.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (one F) observed several times on 12th, and again, possibly the same bird, on 13th.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* one on 13th.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* three on 13th.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* two on 16th.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* one F on 16th.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* singles aboard for several hrs. 18th and 22nd.

A probable Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* seen at a distance on 22nd.

On 15 Apr M.V. *Baltic Eagle* (Met) reported an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* flying low heading north in position 55°02'N 13°28'E.

On 1 May a Robin and a Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* were noted on Rig F.G. *McClintock* (Met), 40nm NE Norfolk coast.

During the period 7-8 May FJA was operating in the Norwegian Sea, about 150nm west of the Lofotens, and noted Turnstones (2), Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* (3), Oystercatcher, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (in breeding plumage), and Swallows (2). Winds were generally SSE/4-6.

PCD logged the following species while operating in Fulmar Oilfield, 56°30'N 02°09'E, in the central North Sea, 130nm NE Northumberland: a probable Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and House Martin *Delichon urbica* on 26 May, a group of four Swallows on 30 May, a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* on 31st, and a Turtle Dove *S. turtur* on 4 Jun. Two *Phylloscopus* warblers were aboard briefly on 7 Jun and flew off in N'ly direction.

A group of about 30 probable House Martins was reported aboard M.V. *Durrington* (Met) 40nm west of Esbjerg on 13 Aug.

IMC recorded a Whimbrel and a Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* both flying W. on 5 Sep in position 55°N 8°E, close off the Danish coast.

At 1250 on 20 Sep M.V. *Elk* (Met) reported large numbers of small birds including "sparrows, Robins, Pied Wagtails, Chaffinches, Siskins and Linnets". Three Sparrowhawks chased small birds and were seen to catch two. The position was 56°N 3°40'E, 150nm SW Norway, the wind was SE/4 and skies overcast. At 1930 many small birds, including Meadow Pipits, *Anthus pratensis*, were found inside the accommodation.

On 13 Nov M.V. *Elk* (Met) recorded a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* when 12nm west of Jutland; the wind was SW force 9.

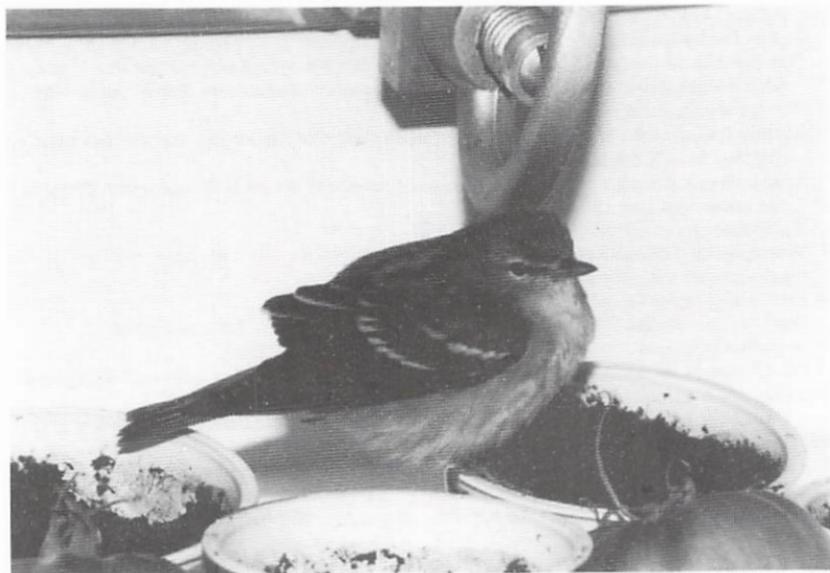
#### SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30° W)

1987

On 10 Mar M.V. *Fortune* (Met) reported a bird of prey on board in an exhausted state on the bridge wing in position 37°25'N 65°14'W, 360nm SE C. Cod. Named as a "snow falcon", but no description was given; it could perhaps have been a Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*. It remained for about 48 hours but then disappeared overnight on 12th. Also joined on 10th was a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* which remained five days and fed on bread and water, but disappeared on 15th when 600nm from Azores.

On 9 Apr two probable Snowy Egrets *Leucophox thula* were reported by M.V. *Vivian* (Met) in position 30°06'N 072°17'W, 350nm NE Bahamas.

On 16 Apr M.V. *Scottish Star* (Met) reported a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, (or possibly a Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*) which landed aboard in position 40°09'N 30°28'W, 60nm NE Azores. Also seen at the same time circling the ship was a wader, thought to have been a Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, and a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp.



Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, M.N.

On 22 Apr MCL recorded an interesting "fall" of spring migrants which arrived on board in Long Island Sound at 40°39'N 71°22'W (nearest land 38nm). The weather was 8/8 cloud, poor visibility in mist and a falling barometer. Most disappeared overnight, but many remained as the ship proceeded south at 15 kts towards Venezuela. Species included Common Flicker *Colaptes auratus* (2M,3F - the two males were several times seen displaying to the females; the group was last seen a.m. 23rd), American Robin *Turdus migratorius*, Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* (2M), Starling, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (1M, 1F) Palm Warbler *D. palmarum* (five males found dead 23rd), Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*, Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus* (four - distinctive yellow lores and alula; one found dead a.m. 23rd), Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (2M, one found dead), White-throated Sparrow *Zenotrichia albicollis* (6); three disappeared night 23/24th, two flew off 25th, but the last remained throughout stay in El Palito, Venezuela but accidentally stunned itself and drowned in the sea at Bonaire on 29th. Five of the six found dead a.m. 23rd had been decapitated, and other fragments and feathers suggested that a raptor had been at work, but no other sign was found.

On 23 Apr JWW recorded the very strange behaviour of a Merlin *Falco columbarius* in position 200nm SE C. Hatteras (N. Carolina), when the bird was first seen swooping around as if searching for prey. It scared a couple of gulls and then suddenly dived and alighted in the sea. It took off and continued following the ship as before, then when just astern of the ship it again stalled and spiralled into the sea. Again it recovered, but after landing on one of the containers just forward of the bridge, it fell over, screeched a few times, twitched and died. Unfortunately it was not possible to recover the body, but a photograph later confirmed the identification.

On 25 Apr MCL found a freshly dead Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* in position 23°08'N 68°28'W, 180nm NE Grand Turk island; the wind was fine, but there had been heavy thunderstorms overnight with winds gusting SW/6.



Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

Photo: Captain J. W. Welch, M.N.

On 25 Apr JWW recorded the following species in position 30° 30'N 80° 10'W, 65nm E. Jacksonville: four Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, a Green Heron *Butorides striatus*, two Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, a Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*, and a dove, probably a Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*.

On 3 May MCL noted two Magnolia Warblers 10nm NE Dominican Republic, and on 5 May a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* 165nm SE C. Fear, S. Carolina. Between 0600-0900 on 6 May he recorded about 120 Common Loons (Great Northern Divers) *Gavia immer* in position 35°08'N 75°10'W, 18nm SE C. Hatteras. They were feeding in groups of 10-15, and others singly, and some were so gorged with fish they had difficulty in taking off from the sea. A male Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* was also aboard briefly. A Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (M) was found aboard on 9th in Albemarle Sound. Two Common Grackles *Quiscalus quiscula* circled twice but did not land on 25 May in position 36nm C. Fear.

On 20 May MGW reported a wader, identified as a probable Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (F) in position 41°N 37°10'W, 280nm NE. Azores. It circled 20 mins without landing and departed to NW. On 28 May, when in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 38nm east of C. Gaspé, he identified the following warblers feasting on the bodies of numerous "mayflies" covering the ship: Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* (M), Bay-breasted *Dendroica castanea* (M), and Common Yellowthroat (F).

On 30 May MCL recorded the following species on board when about 100nm NE Bermuda: Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (remained 7 hrs), Barn Swallow, and Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica*. The weather was overcast, wind W/5, and poor visibility with rain showers.

On 2 Aug M.V. *Dart Britain* (Met) reported a very large flock of geese, probably Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* flying SE in position 41°24'N 57°30'W, 300nm SSE Nova Scotia.

On 11 Aug MCL recorded two probable Pine Warblers *Dendroica pinus* in position 33°58'N 69°41'W, 250nm NW Bermuda.



Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, M.N.

On 17 Aug MGW recorded a female Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* 55nm SE Cape Ray, Newfoundland.

On 21 Sep, soon after leaving the Florida Strait, when 50nm E. Florida, M.V. *Havjarl* (Met) recorded a large number of small birds (probably warblers) flying around the ship. Many were found dead around the decks the following two days, despite attempts made to feed them. On 24th a large hawk (probably a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*) was seen circling the ship (position 33°30'N 68°00'W, 580nm SW C. Hatteras, 180nm NE Bermuda), and perched on the foremast. It disappeared about noon on 25th.

On 27 Sep M.V. *Lackenby* (Met), on passage from Newport News Va to UK, reported three probable American Kestrels *Falco sparverius* pursuing smaller birds around the ship. One took shelter in the accommodation, and was later seen attacking a "storm-petrel". The last one disappeared on 2 Oct.

On 28 Sep M.V. *Fleetwave* had an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* aboard for 2 hours in position 21°10'N 63°15'W, 160nm NE Virgin Is. It was noted that Hurricane "Emily" had passed south and west of area four days previously.

A Met. report (name of ship and date unfortunately omitted) recorded a spectacular "fall" of birds in October, in position 29°42'N 70°22'W, 300nm SW Bermuda, 450nm SE C. Hatteras. "A vast swarm of small birds congregated around the accommodation when the lights were switched on. A conservative estimate of numbers was 600-700 but as the evening progressed more birds arrived ... At the peak it was thought that over 1,000 birds were present ... a large number suffered collisions with the accommodation which proved fatal, and about 40 were cleared off the decks the following day". From the descriptions given most were probably warblers, finches and sparrows; photographs identified a Blackpoll Warbler and a probable Tree Swallow *Iridoprocne bicolor*.

On 14 Oct RLW photographed an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* 420nm SW Azores which landed with difficulty during a SW gale force 7-9. At 0730 on 15th it appeared to be blown off the crane topping lift and careered out of control and was not seen again. The position was then 120nm NNE Azores. (COMMENT. This gale subsequently became the "hurricane" which caused such devastation in UK.)

On 22 Oct a "sea kestrel" (possibly a Merlin) was aboard M.V. *Golden Fleece* (Met), and feathers of small birds were also noted when in position 23°18'N 31°28'W, 450nm from the nearest land, 750nm west of C. Blanco.

On 23 Oct M.V. *Lackenby* (Met) recorded a pair (1M,1F) of Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* which came aboard in Belle Isle Straits, Newfoundland, during a westerly gale. Attempts were made to feed them with raw liver but this was declined, and after being buffeted by 50kt winds for two days they were in a bad state. On 25th they were seen to eat some meat, but disappeared during the night when the ship was in position 55°N 35°W, 360nm SE C. Farewell, having been carried a distance of 900nm course 070°.

On 13 Nov M.V. *Strathbora* (Met) reported a Great Blue Heron in position 40°24'N 49°00'W, 400nm SE C. Race, Newfoundland and 550nm ESE Nova Scotia. It was seen at dawn trying to stand up against strong SW winds; there had been strong SW'ly winds for the past 48 hours.

#### SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1986

On 12 Nov an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* came aboard M.V. *G.A. Walker* (Met) in position 19°30'N 83°20'W, 140nm S. Cuba, and remained until noon next day when 250nm from Nicaragua.

On 24 December a probable Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* arrived on board M.V. *Act 2* (Met) while transiting the Panama Canal. Its legs appeared to be broken, and it was nursed and fed, but subsequently died on 2 Jan when off Halifax, Nova Scotia.

1987

On 17 May M.V. *Harefield* (Met) reported a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in position 14°50'N 70°15'W, 180nm north of Venezuela. An Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* came aboard M.V. *London Victory* (Met) on 16 Sep at 19°17'N 083°11'W, 150nm south of Cuba.

On 18 May MCL recorded a Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melacholicus* aboard in position 12°34'N 63°29'W, 85nm east of Isla La Banquilla, Venezuela.

Six Cattle Egrets landed aboard M.V. *Rubens* (Met) on 28 May when 90nm NW Cuba.

On 30 Sep an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was reported aboard M.V. *Fleetwave* (Met) in position 12°09'N 077°m55'W, 170nm NW Cartagena, Columbia.

On 3 Dec a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was reported by M.V. *Harold la Borda* (Met) in position 12°25'N 62°38'W, 50nm west of Granada.

## SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN (AND BLACK SEA)

1987

On 7-8 Mar M.V. *Stott Stene* (Met) recorded a heavy passage of migrants in the Gulf of Lions, about 90nm S. Provence. The weather was mainly overcast with light winds, and large numbers came on board in the early evening, mainly Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* and wagtails *Motacilla sp.* Next day numerous species were identified including: Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, White Wagtail *M. alba*, Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*, nightjar *Caprimulgus sp.*, Linnet *Acanthis cannabina*, redstart *Phoenicurus sp.* Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Redshank *Tringa totanus* and several unidentified finches, starlings, herons, and doves. Most left the ship on the afternoon of 8th, during increasing wind and rain.

On 12 Mar M.V. *British Force* (Met) noted a White Wagtail 20nm west of Sardinia.

On 14 Mar M.V. *Devonshire* (Met) reported a Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* in position 35°N 20°E, 140nm NW Libya.

PWJ recorded numerous early spring migrants including Swallow *Hirundo rustica* on 18 Mar 30nm SW Sicily, a Chaffinch in central Ionian (130nm ESE C. Passero) on 19 Mar, and another 14nm S. Crete on 20 Mar. and a Swift *Apus apus* followed close astern for few minutes on 21 Mar when 60nm SW Crete. At dawn on 24 Mar a group of six Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (4M and 2F) landed aboard when 30nm west of Jaffa (Israel), later departing eastwards towards land. At 1130 that morning when about 8nm from the coast, Black-headed Wagtails *M.f.feldegg* were seen on board, and also two small warblers resembling Lesser Whitethroats, but with conspicuous red eyes; these may have been Ruppell's Warblers *Sylvia ruppelli*.

Between 27-30 Mar M.V. *Havdrott* (Met) recorded numerous birds of prey at anchor off Port Yuzhny in the Black Sea (46°32'N 30°58'W). These included several Kestrels on 27th, a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* which perched on the rail on 29th, and two Long-eared Owls *Asio flammeus*, one of which was photographed, on 30th, and a Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, identified from an excellent sketch drawn by 2/0 J.B. Moulds.

Further migrants were noted by PWJ on another easterly trip through the Mediterranean, including a Kestrel crossing the Straits of Gibraltar on 13 Apr, a Yellow Wagtail (Ashy-headed race) *M.f. cinereophila* 25nm N. Algeria on 15th, a House Martin *Delichon urbica* 17nm NE C. Bon, and a Swallow 30nm NE Pantellaria on 16th. At 0700 on 17th he saw and photographed a female Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* which settled aboard in the Central Ionian (150nm SW C. Spartivento) in position 36° 15'N 18° 06'E, and also a House Martin. Later that forenoon an unidentified stint *Calidris sp.* was seen, together with four Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, two Swallows, a House Martin and an Ashy-headed Wagtail *M.f. cinereocapilla* in position 36° 03'N 20° 40'E, 70nm SW C. Matapan. The weather throughout this period was fine with winds variable/NE force 2-3. On 18th, when close south of Crete, a Blue-headed Wagtail *M.f.flava* and a House Martin were found dead and photographed, and a White Wagtail, a Swallow, and two House Martins were sighted circling the vessel. A male Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* was aboard on 21st when close off Ashdod, (Israel) on 21st. A Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* attempted to land on board on 28th in position 37° 19'N 11° 35'E, 30nm NE Cape Bon.

A probable Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, and an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* was identified by PWJ on 28 Apr in position 37° 37'N 9° 30'E (20nm NW Bizerta). At 0600 on 30th, in position 5nm south of Almeria (Spain), a hawk, which from its description was possibly a Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus*, was seen carrying a small bird; it appeared to eat this in flight. Also identified were two Spanish Yellow Wagtails *M.f. iberiae*.

On 8 May M.V. *Maersk Harrier* (Met) recorded eight Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* aboard in position 34°32'N 30°58'E, 65nm WSW Cyprus.

Early a.m. on 14 May several small birds, including a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, which flew into the wheelhouse and was photographed aboard M.V. *City of Plymouth* (Met), on passage between Crete and Sicily in position 36°05'N 17°47'E (central Ionian Sea).

On 28 May M.V. *Liverpool Bay* (Met) reported two Turtle Doves and a "hawk" which from the description may have been a Saker Falcon *F. cherrug* 100nm north of Libya, 90nm south of Crete.

On 7 Jun MGW recorded a falcon, later identified as a juvenile Lanner in position 15nm north of Majorca. It was seen to arrive from the south and remained about two hours.

On 11 Jul MGW recorded a possible Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, 25nm SE Corsica, and on 5 Aug saw four swifts, almost certainly Pallid Swifts *Apus pallidus* 10nm west of La Spezia.

On 17 Jul BG recorded a female bunting, either a Black-headed or Red-headed *Emberiza melanocephala* or *E. broniceps* 40nm west of Crete. On 18th he identified two Bonelli's Warblers *Phylloscopus bonelli* which remained aboard 4 hrs. when 55nm north of Egypt (Alexandria).

An interesting variety of migrants were identified by BG in the southern Ionian sea, 35°N 20°E, 140nm SW Greece on 23 Sep: Turtle Doves (6+), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (F), Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* and several *flava* wagtails. He also identified a Garden Warbler *S. borin* 20nm N. Algeria on 25 Sep.

#### SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1986

On 1 Oct M.V. *Fort Assiniboine* (Met) reported several groups (mainly 2-3, but one of 18) of probable Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* in S. Red Sea heading SW towards Ethiopia.



Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* (Juvenile), S. Red Sea  
Photo: Third Officer D. Harnett, M.V. *Fort Dufferin*

On 5 Feb a Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* settled aboard M.V. *Tokyo Bay* (Met) in the Central Red Sea, and remained until arrival at Jeddah.

On 6 Feb a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was on board M.V. *Clydebank* (Met). Four Hoopoes were also noted by M.V. *British Trident* (Met) near Jeddah on 11 Mar.

On 18 Mar M.V. *Devonshire* (Met) recorded six White Wagtails *Motacilla alba* at 25°N 36'E, and an Orphee Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* and a Hoopoe off Jeddah on 19th. Two Grey-headed Kingfishers *Halcyon leucocephala* were noted on 4 May, and a female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* flew into the bridge wing on 5 May where it was photographed.

Another female Kestrel and a juvenile Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus* were photographed aboard M.V. *Fort Dufferin* on 6 Jul in S. Red Sea, and a Hoopoe on 22 Jul.

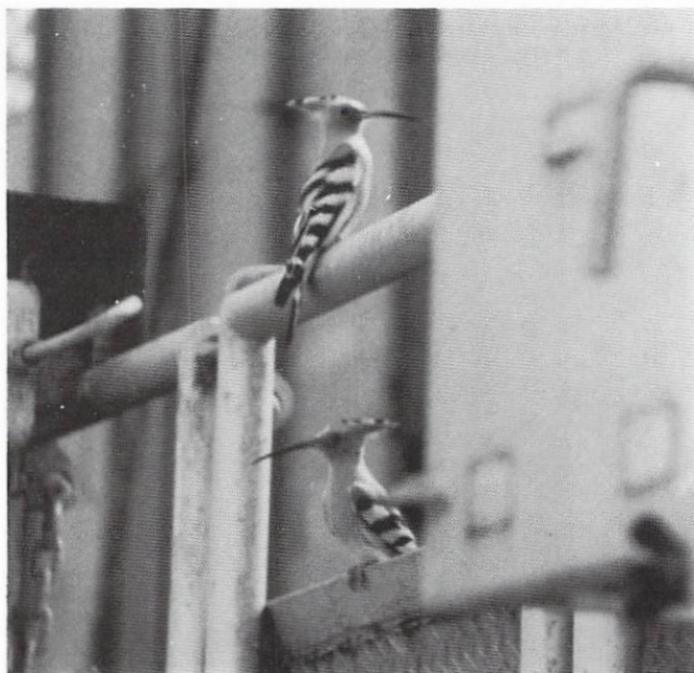
On 27 Jul BG saw a probable Sooty Falcon *F. concolor*, a pratincole *Glareola sp.*, and ten Swallows *H. rustica* in S. Red Sea.

On 17 Sep BG identified the following aboard in the Gulf of Aden, about 120nm south of Arabia: Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* (2), Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis*, Hoopoe, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, and Rufous Bush Chat *Cercothraupis galactotes*. The wind was easterly force 2.

A Hoopoe was aboard M.V. *Tokyo Bay* (Met) in S. Red Sea on 12 Sep.

On 1 Oct M.V. *Flinders Bay* (Met), in S. Red Sea, reported a Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* aboard, also 6-8 Swallows *Hirundo rustica* which remained "tucked up asleep for the night on a vent flap - flash photos were taken from 2 feet away - continued to slumber peacefully". Also noted on 2 Oct, when 60nm NW Jeddah, were a probable Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*, two *flava* wagtails, a Hoopoe and 24 probable Turtle Doves.

M.V. *Liverpool Bay* (Met) recorded a probable Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* when 20nm north of Bab el Mandeb on 12 Nov. After circling the ship it flew off eastwards.



Hoopoes *Upupa epops* aboard M.V. *Botany Bay*  
Photo: (Captain G. D. B. Morris) in S. Red Sea

## SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1986

On 25 Oct a probable Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* was reported by M.V. *Hoegh Duke* (Met) in position 10°30'N 75°15'E, 60nm W. India.

1987

On 18 Jan ARL reported a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* roosting on board in position 28° 30'S 54° 13'E - 435nm SE Madagascar.

M.V. *Moreton May* (Met) reported a "swallow" flying about the ship on 30 Apr in position 3°30'N 63°E - 600nm NE Seychelles.

On 10 Aug BG recorded a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* which tried to land aboard in the central Indian Ocean, 16°05'N 69°43'E, 240nm west of India. It circled for one hour without success and departed south.

On 25 Aug M.V. *Devonshire* recorded a probable Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* in position 10°36'N 63°24'E, 400nm west of Laccadive Is.

On 13 Sep M.V. *Cardigan Bay* (Met) noted a *flava* wagtail (F) north of Socotra.

On 28 Sep ARL recorded a probable Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* in position 21°22'N 61°34'E, 120nm SE Ras al Hadd. Wind was SW/6. On 29th a Swallow and a probable Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* were aboard 240nm SW Kutch, India. A probable Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* circled the ship on 3 Oct in position 07°48'N 76°10'E, 60nm SW India. Swallows were sighted far from land on the following occasions: 330nm south of Sri Lanka on 6 Oct, 420nm S. Sri Lanka on 7th (2) and 8th (3), and 600nm NE Diego Garcia on 20 Oct.

On 17 Oct M.V. *Cardigan Bay* (Met) reported a probable Hobby *Falco subbuteo* which landed on top of containers at sunset when 300nm ESE Socotra; the wind was NE/4. On 18th, when 50nm SW Socotra, a Grey Heron was seen flying low, and keeping station with the ship for about one hour heading 281° at 22kts.

On 19 Oct a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was briefly aboard M.V. *Kowloon Bay* (Met) in position 7°36'N 74°02'E, Eight Degree Channel, Maldives Is.

## SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1987

An owl photographed aboard S.S. *Leonia* (Met) on 28 Nov off Fujairah (U.A.E.) was probably an Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia*, or possibly a Bruce's Scops Owl *O. brucei*. It remained for 1½ days.

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

1986

On 22 Aug S.S. *Act 4* (Met) recorded three swallows flying around the deck containers 5°06'N 83°31'W, 15nm south of Pta Mariato, Panama. From the descriptions given they were probably juv. Violet-green Swallows *Tachycineta thalassina*.

On 25 Nov four Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* landed aboard M.V. *Willowbank* (Met) in position 21°14'N 133°48'W, 11nm SW. California, course 228°/18kts. All four remained until p.m. 26th, but only two were seen a.m. 28th. The last one was last seen in a very weak state, being continually buffeted by the wind as it struggled to remain on top of the containers, at noon on 28th. The ship was then 360nm NE Christmas Island, a distance travelled of over 700nm.

On 20 Jan M.V. *ACT 7* (Met) recorded a probable juvenile Purple Gallinule *Porphyryda martinica* on board in position 3° 31'S 82° 20'W, 80nm west of Ecuador; it refused food and skulked under the bridge wing until dusk, and then disappeared so was presumed to have flown off.

DMS recorded a splendid male Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* in full breeding plumage which flew into the wheelhouse during a heavy rainstorm in the Malacca Straits on 1 Mar. Several Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were crossing the straits on 2/3 Mar.

A probable Northern Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was reported (Met) in the South China Sea, 280nm NE Vietnam on 5 Apr.

Three probable Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* landed aboard M.V. *Hoegh Duke* (Met) when 160nm east of Taiwan on 7 Apr; they rested about 15 mins before flying off in a NW direction.

M.V. *Ormond* (Met) reported the following sightings on 9 Apr when 140nm south of SW Japan (29°N 132°40'E, Co. 024°. Winds ESE/3 to SE/4):

Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. "Small parties overtook the ship throughout the day. In the early evening when overcast and raining about 20 took shelter around the ship. About a dozen perched on the catwalk edge handrails just forward of the wheelhouse. Some preened, others huddled up with wings under wings and dozed for short spells. Continual interruptions were made by other birds landing on. Many matings took place seemingly indiscriminately".

Wagtails — "several, both white and grey varieties perched in the same place."

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*. One was identified "from very close examination".

Bitterns. Three unidentified, very nervous, also a probable Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* which remained all day.

Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squaterola*. Three probable, circled ship then landed aboard.

On 3 Jun a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* came aboard M.V. *Tor Bay* (Met) when alongside in Melbourne, Australia.



Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, off coast of Oregon

Photo: Captain J. W. Gurton, M.N.

On 18 Jun a European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* was found in an exhausted state on the bridge of M.V. *Discovery Bay* (Met) (on passage New Zealand to Oakland, U.S.A.), and died two hours later when 19nm west of Sunday Island. It had first been noted in position 29°S 178°W, 50nm east of Kermadec Is.

In the China Sea, BG recorded two Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* and two Barn Swallows aboard on 17 Aug. 60nm E. Vietnam, and a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* was heard calling 180nm SE Taiwan on 18 Aug. On 5 Sep he recorded at least five Barn Swallows, an unidentified wader *Calidris* sp., and a shrike *Lanius* sp. 180nm E. Taiwan. On 6th, when 180nm W. Philippines, he noted around the ship two probable Blue Rock Thrushes *Monticola solitarius*, and a probable Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*.

In the Eastern Pacific, JWG photographed a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* on 13 Aug in position 52°04'N 167°23'E, 120nm south Myedni Is., off Kamchatka, and, on 6 Sep a Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* in position 46°N 125°W, 50nm off coast of Oregon, U.S.A. Next day three Yellow Warblers *Dendroica petechia* were aboard catching insects on the bridge and photographed, in position 41°N 125°W.

On 26 Sep M.V. *Tokyo Bay* (Met) was berthed alongside at Busan, South Korea when a strange bird was found on board, presumed to have arrived during the approach the previous evening with strong westerly winds. It was caught but escaped several times, and was quickly named "crazy legs" from the way it scuttled around. It was still aboard am 28th, but looking very much the worse for wear, and was identified later from photographs as a Watercock *Gallinex cinerea*.

On 6 Oct NGC recorded a Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus* 62nm NNE Montebello Is. at 19°24'S 115°55'E. Whilst on passage Christmas Island to Gove, Gulf of Carpentaria, N. Australia, NGC recorded a number of Barn Swallows: five 15nm W. Ashmore Reef (12°22'S 122°36'E) on 13 Nov, singles on 14th 75nm SE Ashmore Reef, and at 13°37'S 124°32'E, 65nm C. Voltaire, NW Australia on 15th. Also sighted on 15th was a Whimbrel. A Great Egret *Egretta alba* was sighted in position 11°32'S 128°24'E flying ESE towards Darwin. This position was 186nm SE Timor and 129nm from Australian



Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, North Pacific

Photo: Captain J. W. Gurton, M.N.

mainland. Also seen at this time was a Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* which circled for 30 mins and a Fork-tailed Swift. On 18 Nov a Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* was seen in position 10°49'S 135°41'E, 53nm NW Wessel Island NT, and on 20th two Whimbrel subspecies (*N.p. variegatus*) were seen in the Gulf of Carpentaria 49nm east of C. Wessel NT.

On 1 Nov two unidentified falcons came aboard M.V. *Liverpool Bay* (Met) in position 27°30'N 129°45'E, off Awami Gonto 500nm NE Philippines.

In E. Pacific, M.V. *Binsnes* (Met) reported a probable European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* on 2 Nov in position 37°32'N 136°38'W, 600nm west of San Francisco CA. It was showing signs of exhaustion and died on 10th.

Six birds which came aboard M.V. *Act 8* (Met) drifting off Botany Bay, NSW, Australia, on 7 Nov, were identified as Pink Cockatoos *Cacatua leadbeaters*.

## SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1987

On 22 Mar M.V. *West Moor* (Met) reported a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* which landed on board and was photographed in position 42°58'S 42°14'W, 720nm SE Uruguay. On 29 Mar a bird was photographed, and later identified as a Least Seedsnipe *Thinicorus ruminivorus* in position 38°47'S 44°52'W, 475nm SE Uruguay.

On 23 Apr, M.V. *Tolaca Bay* (Met) was on passage southwards towards Capetown, and reported a probable Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata* in position 19°30'S 04°48'E, 420nm WSW C. Frio (West Africa). Also noted was a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* in a very weak condition, and a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* which later died.

On 13 Nov a "curlew", probably a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* was reported by M.V. *West Moor* (Met) in position 44°03'S 49°39'W, 500nm SE Argentina, heading in a NE'ly direction.

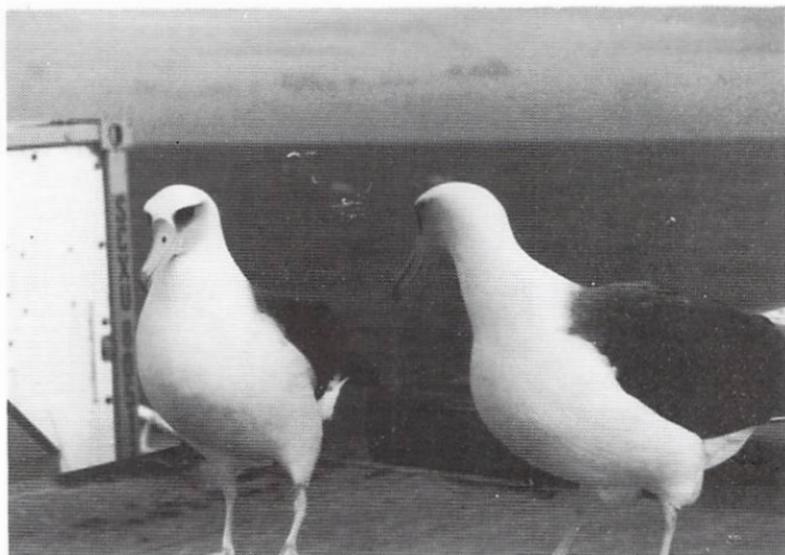
## SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS

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

Thanks to the continuing good offices of the Marine Division of the Meteorological Office we have received many reports of birds extracted from Met. Logbooks. The landbirds are dealt with by Commander Case-ment, and I am now trying to follow in the footsteps of Captain Tony Young who, due to ill health, has sadly had to give up dealing with the seabird records. With the reports have been numerous photographs and sketches, many of enviable quality.

In *Sea Swallow* 35 there were reports of Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis* courting on board in 1976 and 1985. We have another report in 1987, together with a splendid series of photographs. This was reported in full in *The Marine Observer*, January 1988, but is summarised here:

M.V. *Wellington Star*, Captain D.A. Ganderton, on 10 February 1987. The vessel was stopped and drifting in position 34°00'N 134°00'W; a Laysan Albatross was observed to land clumsily on top of a container, followed moments later by another. After resting for a short time, the two birds took up positions facing each other and carried out a mating dance which consisted of bobbing heads in unison, then holding heads and bills vertically, sometimes in unison and sometimes not, followed by each bird placing its bill momentarily under its wing. The birds then circled each other with a comical rolling gait and heads bobbing as



Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis*, North Pacific, January 1987  
Photo: Radio Officer G. Shaw aboard M.V. *Wellington Star*

before, and then approached each other "bill fencing", all the time making a loud clacking noise by bringing upper and lower mandibles sharply together. They were seen to adopt a mating position during the above ritual, which they repeated a number of times. Both birds remained on board for about two hours.

Two reports of the Christmas Island race of the White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaeton lepturus fulvus* were received, four days and about 300 miles apart - on 25 June '87 M.V. *Devonshire*, Capt. J.A. Corcoran, in position 05°52'N 96°26'E (north of Sumatra), and 29 June M.V. *Hampshire*, Capt. C.O. Thomas, in position 06°00'N 91°48'E. Both observers described the striking golden colour of the plumage.

M.V. *Cirolana*, Capt. J.R. French, on 25 August 1986 in position 61°03'N 01°21'W reported two skuas, type unspecified; an immature with a yellow ring on right leg, and an adult with a silver ring. I would be interested to hear from anyone who could suggest where these birds were ringed.

Two reports of diving-petrels on board were received, something I have never been fortunate enough to see: M.V. *Act 7*, Capt. R. Brownbill, in position 54°06'S 157°12'W on 1 July '87 reported a Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix* on board. From the excellent sketch, however, it seemed to me more likely to be a Georgian Diving-petrel *P. georgicus*. On 10 June '87 M.V. *Tolaga Bay*, Capt. J.C. Cox, in position 52°15'S 103°36'W reported a Magellan Diving-petrel *P. magellani*, accompanied by an excellent photograph, a very long way offshore.



Courtship display of Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis*  
Photo: Radio Officer G. Shaw aboard M.V. *Wellington Star*  
Reproduced by kind permission of the Editor *The Marine Observer*

M.V. *Act 7*, Capt. G. Stubbings, in position 55°16'S 64°18'W on 22 September '87 reported a Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba* which stayed on board for about an hour - noted as looking like a large fat white pigeon with a pinkish wattle below the eye.

Three ships reported single Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on the water in mid-Atlantic during the early months of the year. In each case they noted that they swam away from the ship and did not take off.

This is just a selection of the more interesting of the many reports received, most of which I was able to identify. I thank all those who sent in reports. Please keep them coming.

Captain P.W.G Chilman, M.N., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York YO2 1SF.



Common diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix* aboard  
H.M.S. *Birmingham* off South Georgia, October 1984

Photo: Able Seaman T. Lawrence

## SUMMER BIRDS ON SPITSBERGEN

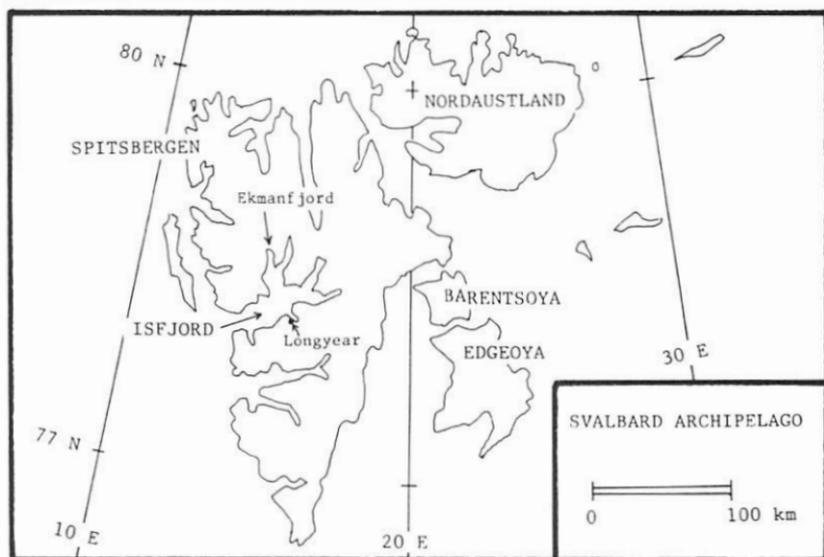
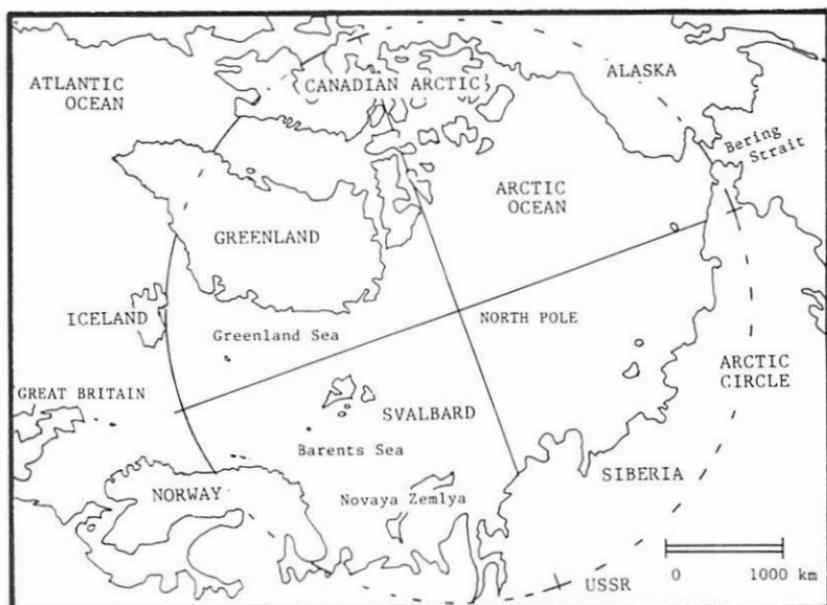
By Commander Chris Furse, Royal Navy.

Winter birds are easy. Only the Spitsbergen Ptarmigan remains, plus a few seabirds out in the darkened fringes of the pack-ice. So this brief article, based on an expedition to Spitsbergen in 1987, is about the birds which nest there in the short summer season.

The Svalbard archipelago lies at the remote tail-end of the Atlantic Drift, halfway from the Arctic Circle to the North Pole. Greenland's northern end lies 500km west across the Greenland Sea, and Novaya Zemlya 900 km south-east across the Barent's Sea. Early this century Amundsen and others left Svalbard by air, crossing 3,400 km of the Arctic Ocean to reach Alaska. Nowadays one flies into the capital village of Longyearbyen by jet airliner from Tromso, 800 km to the south in Norway. Svalbard is a long way from anywhere.

The archipelago covers an area as big as Scotland. Spitsbergen at the north-west corner is the largest island, the size of Wales. The four thousand Norwegian and Russian inhabitants are all on Spitsbergen, mostly in the four coal-mining villages, some in the two scientific stations, plus four (or five?) isolated trappers. The island is split by several fjords, which are highways for skidoos in winter, and rich fishing grounds after the pack melts in May, just when the summer birds arrive. The longest at 100 km is Isfjord, and the three sizeable settlements are there. During the three months of summer, expeditions, scientists and oil prospectors are moved by trawlers, or the three small charter boats, or by helicopter. Then in September, as the last Fulmars fledge from the cliffs, the snow and winter night return, and visitors depart. In seven weeks, in summer 1986 and '87, we heard passing helicopters on many days, but only six boats briefly visited our fjord, a branch of Isfjord only 50 km from Longyearbyen. Spitsbergen is not a crowded island.

The island is all mountainous, though most peaks are only about 1,200 metres high. Most of the high ground is mantled by ice-caps, with typical strings of rock 'nunataks', which rise from the ice to mark underlying ridges, and provide nesting sites for Little Auks and other seabirds. Glaciers flowing down from the ice-caps have scoured out great U-shaped valleys on their way to the sea; all the glaciers have diminished since the Pleistocene ice-age maxima over 10,000 years ago, and the sides of these valleys usually have tremendous scree fans, below lines of frost-shattered cliffs. Near to the coast, the ledges on these and other cliffs often hold vast colonies of seabirds - particularly on the west coast, close to the richest seas. Released from the weight of ice, the whole land has risen iso-statically, exposing a skirt of gentle ground around the coast, sometimes 10 km wide, and often with flights of raised beaches. These 'strandflats' are largely covered with tundra vegetation, waterlogged because of the permafrost a metre down; this boggy tundra burgeons with insect life in summer, providing good breeding habitats for wildfowl and waders.



A characteristic of Svalbard glaciers is their sudden surges, when the snout may advance 10 km in 10 years; the subsequent retreat leaves barren moraine wastes, which terns use for nesting.

There are no trees in Svalbard - at least none recognisable as such, only the creeping Arctic Willow whose leaves always stick to the bottom of one's tent groundsheet. However the beaches are littered with driftwood from Siberia. The Snow Bunting is the only small passerine species: this, however, is not because of the habitat but due to the extreme isolation.

In common with most Arctic islands, the marine food-webs have a much greater turnover of energy than the terrestrial ones. On Svalbard this is exaggerated by a feature almost unique in the Arctic - there are no small herbivorous mammals, presumably because the isolation has prevented them ever reaching the archipelago. This absence of Lemmings and Arctic Hares results in a disappointing absence of birds of prey. The only avian predators are Glaucous Gulls (which exploit cliff-nesting seabirds), and a few skuas.

Larger terrestrial mammals, Reindeer and Arctic Foxes, arrived long ago. The latter probably came as scavengers following Polar Bears over the pack-ice. The foxes usually avoid swimming; therefore, to protect themselves against the foxes, many wildfowl and other birds nest on islands in the fjords, or on islets in lakes (or, as the Barnacle Goose, on isolated cliff pinnacles).

I was lucky to be asked to lead a British Schools Exploring Society expedition to Svalbard. Two of us reconnoitred Ekmanfjord for a week in August 1986. In 1987 we returned there with 65 teenagers and 21 other leaders for a six-week expedition. We arrived on 13 July, already too late to find the Pinkfeet at their nests, and we left on 27 August, by which time Fulmars were the only species not yet fledging, and some species had already migrated south. Two of the seven groups of youngsters had chosen to work on birds during the three-week scientific core of the expedition, doing quantitative surveys of breeding populations. The results are being passed to the Norsk Polar-Instituutt in Oslo, where Fridtjof Mehlum is building up a computer databank on breeding populations of birds in Svalbard. He is studying in particular the seabirds, linking breeding population data with quantitative studies offshore in the Greenland Sea, of seabird feeding and prey biology.

It is a lovely place, and the bird life is interesting. We did not however see the spectacular quantities one tends to expect from so many wildlife films, taken at the best times, and at the best places for each species. If you like mountains, and snow, and sea, and islands, and loneliness, and birds, then I can heartily recommend Spitsbergen in summer; the weather is also gentle then.

The notes below include all the species recorded in Svalbard more than a dozen times. The first line (in brackets) for each species shows the overall status, from the definitive work *Avifauna Svalbardensis* by H.L. Lovenskiold (Norsk Polar-Instituutt, 1964). Where only one line is given, we did not see that species ourselves. Additional lines are from our own observations around Ekmanfjord in 1987.

**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*. (Rare visitor; may breed?). One probable, but not certain sighting on the fjord.

**Red-throated Diver** *G. stellata*. (Widespread breeder). Several pairs bred in our area, hatchings from before 26 July to 7 August. Habits just like in Scotland.

**Fulmar**. *Fulmarus glacialis*. (Widespread numerous breeder). Bred on almost all suitable cliffs in our area, up to 30 km inland and up to 800 m high. Nearly all were blue phase. Hatching was probably mid- to late-July. On 21 August chicks were still in the nests and all seen were still downy. A few parents fed in local fjords, but there was a continual traffic of coasting Fulmars, probably to and from Isfjord, but possibly even the open sea.

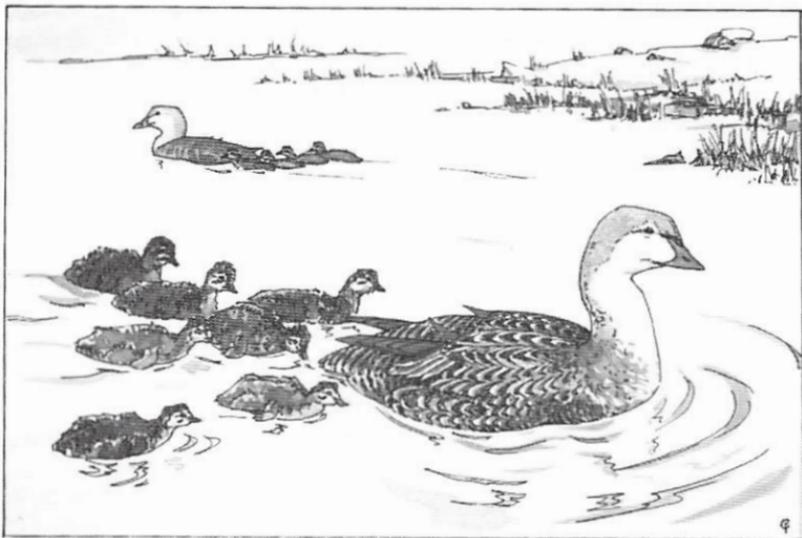
**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*. (Scattered breeder; some winter). Some pairs bred on islands in the fjord, and one or two on mainland tundra pools with islets. Most hatchings were in late July or early August. The largest flock on Ekmanfjord was of 88 on 27 July, probably moulting drakes.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*. (Very rare vagrant; has bred once).

**Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima*. (Scarce breeder, near west coast). They used to breed densely on many Eider-holms, but have been much reduced by egg-harvesting; occasionally a few winter. Scattered pairs bred in our area. Hatchings were from 17 July to early August. Females took their broods to the fjords, favouring river-mouths. Drakes were already moulting when we arrived. Flocks of over 40 adults were seen in the fjords from early August.

**King Eider** *S. spectabilis*. (Scarce breeder, near west coast). This is one of the special birds for British visitors. We only identified a couple of drakes, but in moult they are not easy to distinguish at a distance. Several nests and families were found. Hatchings were from late July to the second week of August - later than *S. mollissima* (as is normal). Females kept their young on freshwater pools on the tundra, unlike *S. mollissima*. We hoped for (but did not see) post-breeding aggregations of families in flocks of over 100. The rufous colouring, heavier barring and peakier forehead, mentioned in most field-guides did help to separate the females from *S. mollissima*: however, the most distinctive characteristic when swimming were the paler and greyer cheeks and neck, and the flash of lemon yellow at the base of the bill. The most certain diagnostic feature was the two feathers spiking up from the back, which were very obvious with good views: these are normally illustrated for the drakes, but I had not seen them either mentioned or illustrated for the females.

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*. (scattered breeder). Families had already left the breeding territories by 15 July, but nest remains were found in many places. Moulting flocks of up to 150 birds were seen on the two islands in Ekmanfjord, and on some areas of 'strand-flat' tundra. There was no evidence of pre-moult movements into or out of our area; nor was there definite evidence of migration beginning before we left, although many were flying by mid-August. The population of our area was about 150-400 pairs.



King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis*

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla hrota*. (Common breeder elsewhere). Svalbard has the only Pale-breasted Brent Geese breeding in Eurasia. Formerly they bred in large numbers on islands in Isfjord, but the harvesting of Eider and Brent eggs has eliminated them there, and reduced the whole Svalbard population to a tenth of the former numbers. We did not see any sign of Brent Geese.

**Barnacle Goose** *B. leucopsis*. (scarce scattered breeder). The Svalbard population winters in Scotland, and has been intensively studied, but its breeding status around Ekmanfjord was not known. We were unable to check a report of birds nesting on an islet just south of our area, but found one cliff-nesting pair. Their young left the nest on 8 August. Another pair reached the fjord with two downy goslings a few days before that.

**Greenland Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*. (Rare visitor).

**Spitsbergen Ptarmigan** *Lagopus mutus hyperboreus*. (Endemic resident) Pairs bred on most mountain areas above 300 metres, and females with young were seen from our arrival in mid-July. The average brood size was three, but one brood of ten was seen, feeding furiously among Viviparous Knotweed. One adult was watched leading an Arctic Fox by a broken-wing display downhill for over 100 metres. By mid-August, families were seen quite regularly on lower slopes.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*. (Vagrant only).

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*. (Very scarce and local breeder). There were only a few records of breeding in Svalbard, all on Spitsbergen and most in Isfjord, though none recorded for our area. We saw a group of six in mid-July. In early August we found a pair apparently holding territory, but could not prove breeding.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*. (Very scarce local breeder). At least four pairs bred in our area, most a little back from the beach on stony tundra or moraine wastes; another single bird held territory and displayed with a Purple Sandpiper. The first flying young were seen on 4 August, having moved down to the beach; other fledglings were still in breeding territories in mid-August. These are really beautiful birds seen close-to in summer plumage.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. (Very rare vagrant).

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*. (Very rare breeder, one site in NW).

**Purple Sandpiper** *C. maritima*. (Common breeder). This is the Svalbard wader, nesting on tundra, mostly near the shore, but also up to 15 km inland. Hatching dates varied greatly, from early July to early August; usually only one or two chicks reached flying age. They liked eroded stream gullies, but then, in mid-August began to collect into flocks frequenting the shore.

**Dunlin** *C. alpina*. (Rare visitor; may have bred occasionally). We saw individuals on three or four occasions from mid-July to mid-August, once two on tundra bog, the others all on the shore.

**Sanderling** *C. alba*. (Rare visitor; may breed somewhere).

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. (rare visitor and breeder).

**Grey Phalarope** *P. fulicarius*. (breeds, mostly in the west). Pairs were seen on two islands, and breeding proven at one mainland area, where four families of downy chicks were on a lake on 20 July. Moulting individuals were still there on 21 August.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*. (Very scarce migrant; 1986).

**Arctic Skua** *S. parasiticus*. (Widespread breeder in small numbers). About 12 pairs bred in our area. The first juveniles flying on 18 August indicated hatching late July, within the normal range of 20 July to 10 August. Most pairs were kleptoparasitic on seabirds, and pairs on one wide 'strandflat' area specialised in grounding Fulmars returning to their nesting cliffs. One pair, however, regularly scavenged on the clay beach below a glacial melt-river.

**Long-tailed Skua** *S. longicaudus*. (Scarce visitor; rare breeder). This species' breeding is normally closely linked with Lemming populations, so breeding in Svalbard is anomalous. We found two territorial pairs; one pair was 12 km inland; the other fed in Ekmanfjord and hatched two chicks, one of which survived to fly first on 17 August. Individuals were seen foraging near the shore at irregular intervals throughout our time there; these often chased Arctic Terns, but we witnessed no successes.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*. (Widespread breeder). We found them breeding on cliffs next to colonies of Fulmars or Little Auks, singly beside small or diffuse colonies, but about 50 pairs formed a loose colony at one rich cliff area. None were proven nesting at sea level, perhaps because of the scarcity of Eiders. Apart from some scavengers

at Longyearbyen, the first birds seen on the fjords were family parties from 5 August onward. One family was seen flying inland up a glacier in mid-August, as if aiming for the west coast. Some young had still not fledged by 23 August.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *L. marinus*. (Rare breeder, increasing).

**Herring Gull** *L. argentatus*. (Rare breeder, mainly on Bjornoya).

**Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini*. (Rare visitor).

**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea*. (Very rare vagrant, but feeds 200 km north).

**Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea*. (Regular visitor; some breeding colonies). Single birds were seen irregularly in our area. Longyearbyen usually has one or two scavenging. It was interesting to see their resemblance to Snow Petrels *Pagodroma nivea*, their southern ecological equivalent.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*. (Widespread numerous breeder). Adults foraged regularly into Ekmanfjord, often in flocks of about 20, and in mid-July a dense concentration of about 500 were feeding close under a glacier snout, where a sub-glacial river emerged under-water below the ice-cliff. These all probably came from a known colony in Isfjord, as we found no colonies in our area. No sub-adults were seen until the third week of August, when we saw the first juveniles in Ekmanfjord.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*. (Widespread breeder). Several small colonies were found around Ekmanfjord, the largest on the two islands, where 14 and 43 pairs were counted, the latter close by a rich feeding area over a tidal sand-bar. Individual nests were scattered within the colonies. Colonies were typically in partially-vegetated moraine wastes with similar relief to sand-dunes, but one was beautifully sited on a tundra pool with divers, geese and duck. Lovenskiold quotes a wide range of hatching dates from 6 July to 30 August, with most 15 July to 20 August. We saw the first juveniles flying in mid-August: however, some may have gone earlier as territorial defence had weakened by then, and some were still flightless on 21 August. Allowing 21 days fledging period, this gives fledging dates 27 July to 20 September, with most 5 August to 10 September. All these dates agree with Lovenskiold.

**Razorbill** *Alca torda*. (Very scarce breeder, south and west).

**Little Auk** *Plautus alle*. (Widespread numerous breeder). We found unrecorded cliff colonies in five different areas. They nest in crannies on very steep cliffs, so counts are notoriously difficult, but we estimated that the three main areas each held several thousand pairs. Their departure on 3-5 August, was dramatically quick, complete and synchronous, at least in the three main areas; none were seen thereafter on the cliffs, and very few in Eikmanfjord and Nordfjord which had previously been heavily-used foraging areas. Allowing 20 days fledging period, this gives hatching dates of 14-15 July, at the early end of the normal range. It was a marvellous experience to stand on a rocky summit, far from the sea watching parties of Little Auks flying around and around and around 'chattering' surprisingly softly, before tumbling aerobically down to the cliffs below one's feet.



Little Auks *Plautus alle*

**Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge*. (Bjornoya only).

**Brunnich's Guillemot** *U. lomvia*. (Widespread breeder). These breed mainly on the west coast of Spitsbergen, where there are vast colonies exploiting the end of the Atlantic Drift; they may also winter pelagically offshore. Adults fed in our fjords in small numbers throughout the period; we suspected one sizeable colony that we were unable to reach, but in our area we only actually found one tiny colony, among Fulmars.

**Black Guillemot** *Cepphus grylle*. (Widespread breeder; some winter). Small colonies were scattered around all coasts, most near shore, but some up to 8 km inland. Because they usually foraged quite close inshore they gave the appearance of being the commonest auk species. The first juveniles were seen at sea in the second week of August, but many birds were still in the colonies on 21 August. Allowing a fledging period of 36 days, this gives dates in the middle of the range given by Lovenskiold for hatching - 1-31 July. Having always assumed that 'Tystie' was a Celtic name for these dumpy little birds, I was surprised to discover it is the Norwegian name for the species.

**Spitsbergen Puffin** *Fratercula arctica naumanni*. (Common breeder west coast). Puffins were common visitors to Ekmanfjord in small numbers, with parties of up to ten regularly fishing. Several sites in our area were suspected to be Puffin colonies because of flight-lines observed, but all those seen foraging could possibly have come from the two known colonies further up Isfjord. Adults were still feeding offshore on 23 August, and no juveniles had been seen by then; Lovenskiold had little hard data, but suggested that hatching peaks in early August, with juveniles fledging in September after 47-51 days at the nest.

**Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* (Very rare, but regular visitor).

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*. (No previous record). Part of an owl's skeleton was found on a ridge-crest above Lappebre: one foot and some tail feathers were the only recognisable parts, and both suggested this species. Stupidly, I left the foot behind when it began to smell, and it may not now be possible to confirm an identification from the tail-feathers alone. That would be a good lesson for me - to do my homework beforehand.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*. (Very rare visitor).

**Common Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Very scarce visitor, has bred).

**Greenland Redpoll** *Carduelis h.hornemanni*. (Very rare vagrant).

**Snow Bunting** *Pluvialis nivalis*. (Widespread common breeder). Pairs were scattered in all suitable locations, from sea-level to over 600 metres, with stream valleys a favourite habitat. By mid-July when we arrived, most pairs were feeding young. Lovenskiold states that most young leave the nest in early August. By 22 August, family parties were moving about near the coast, probably having come down from higher up, inland. But only in our last days in Longyearbyen did we see any flocks larger than a single family. There are no proven records of their wintering, and flocking is probably a pre-migration routine.

Commander J.R.C. Furse, O.B.E., F.R.G.S., Royal Navy, Hegg Hill Oast, Smarden, Kent TN23 7NX.

LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM  
OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1987

By Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy

Records from or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) were received from R.C.L. Aran and Met. Staff of O.W.S *Cumulus*, and observations cover the following periods:

24 Feb, 3 Apr-9 May, 22 May-3 Jun, 26-29 Jun, 18 Aug-3 Sep,  
18 Sep-5 Oct, 16 Oct-16 Nov.

Grey Lag Goose *Anser anser*. One flew past 20 Apr heading NW.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis*. 20 Sep. one male seen in water close alongside; white vertical stripe on flank clearly seen.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. Singles 1 Sep. and 2 Oct.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. 18 Aug (1), 19 Aug (2), 22 Aug (1), 9 Nov (1)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. Singles 22 and 26 May. One on 30 Oct.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. One on 26 May.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. One on 7 Nov perched on rail several times, dep. SE.; another on board one hour on 10 Nov, dep. SE.

Crag Martin? *Hirundo rupestris*. One possible flying round ship on 18 Sep; white spots on tail noted. (This record seems unlikely, but not impossible. M.B.C.).

Swallow *H. rustica*. One arr. from SE 17 Apr, remained 18th but died on 19th. 23 May (1), 26 May (3), 27 May (2), singles on 3, 26 and 29 Jun. One flew past heading SE on 16 Oct.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. Up to five around throughout 26 May, two on 27 May.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*. Singles on 3 Apr, 21 Sep and 16 Oct. (dep SE.).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. Five aboard on 30 Oct, one found later dead. 3 Nov (1), 5 Nov (2), 6 Nov (1). One arrived on board from north on 8 Nov, circled several times and settled briefly.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles aboard briefly 30 Aug, 3 Sep, 30 Sep (caught and caged overnight, dep. SE on 1 Oct), 2 Oct and 11 Oct.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. One arr. from north 1800 on 21 Aug, aboard one hour and dep SE.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*. One flew past heading SE on 6 Nov.

Redwing *T. iliacus*. One on 7 Apr. On 24 Apr several groups, (10), (3), and (15) circled ship and dep. NNW. Singles on 29 Apr and 3 May. Autumn passage - singles on 18, 19 and 22 Oct, 28 Oct (8), singles on 29, 30 and 31 Oct. One aboard briefly on 14 Nov.

Reed Bunting? *Emberiza schoeniclus*. One probable aboard on 20 Sep.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One M and one F in winter plumage flew past 30 feet on 5 Oct.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Two aboard 16 Oct, one 17 Oct. Two arr. 6 Nov from NW and aboard 30 mins before dep. SE.

SEABIRD REPORTS FROM  
OCEAN WEATHER SHIP STATION LIMA (57° N 20° W) 1987

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

The format of the summary table remains as in previous years.

The periods of observation are not continuous - all are from O.W.S. *Cumulus*, an increase of three days this year to 289 days.

Daily counts include a total of 10,876 Fulmars (of which 36 were blue phase), 155 Gannets (66 immatures), 3 Herring Gulls (0), 209 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (64), 286 Greater Black-backed Gulls (74), 19 Glaucous Gulls (9), and 9,287 Kittiwakes (2,267).

New species reported this year are Little Gull (total of 15 adults and 11 imm.), and Bonaparte's Gull (7 adults and 8 imm.).

Species reported in previous years but not seen in 1987 are Cory's Shearwater, Little Shearwater, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Iceland Gull and Sandwich Tern.

A doubtful Slender-billed Gull was reported in January, but unfortunately no description accompanied the report. This species has been recorded as a rare vagrant to Britain from the Mediterranean, and is possible, but rather unlikely.

Kittiwake numbers were down about 2,000 on 1986, and no month averaged more than 100 per day.

No birds were reported as oiled this year which it is hoped is an indication of cleaner seas.

I have been looking at the figures for the less common birds for the last few years and trying to bring them to a common denominator; however I think I can safely say that they vary greatly from year to year.

The R.N.B.W.S. is greatly indebted to all those of the Met. Staff who continue to make these valuable observations.

OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS  
SUMMARY OF SEABIRD SIGHTINGS, STATION LIMA (57°N 20°W)

Month 1987	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation Days (Total 289)	30	22	25	24	27	24	26	20	21	24	22	24
Fulmar	O	O	O	+	O	O	X	O	O	X	O	O
Great Shearwater					-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sooty Shearwater					-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Manx Shearwater				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wilson's Storm-Petrel						-						
British Storm-Petrel	-	-	-	-				-				
Gannet	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Great Skua	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Pomarine Skua					-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arctic Skua				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Long-tailed Skua					-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Herring Gull		-			-							
Lesser Black-backed Gull	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Greater Black-backed Gull	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kittiwake	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	O	O	O	O
Black-headed Gull				-								
Bonaparte's Gull				-								-
Little Gull										-	-	-
Arctic Tern								-	-	-	-	-
Common Tern							-	-	-	-	-	-
Little Auk			-	-	-					-		
Guillemot				-	-							-
Razorbill					-	-						
Puffin				-	-		-					

Key - Occasional sightings  
+ Average 1 - 9 per day

O Average 10 - 49 per day  
X Average 50 or more per day

## OBSERVING BIRDS FROM RESEARCH SHIPS

By Third Officer A.R. Louch M.N.

Birdwatching from scientific vessels seems to be either very rewarding or very frustrating, but I suppose the same can be said of all ship-borne ornithology! The following gives a brief outline to the type of scientific cruises we may be asked to undertake, and birdwatching under the different conditions encountered.

In the broadest sense, the type of work carried out by research ships can be divided into two categories:

A. Data and sample collecting whilst the ship is underway - samples of may be required of the seabed, flora, fauna, or seawater for analysis, perhaps by towing some piece of equipment eg. seismic profiling, plankton net towing etc.

B. Sampling carried out whilst the ship is hove to. This could be for any length of time from a few minutes to a number of days.

The first category will normally allow for good seabird watching, provided the ship is steaming at a reasonable speed, say from 5 knots to the ship's maximum of about 12 knots.

The second category can make practically impossible counts of certain species which habitually follow ships, eg. gulls, prions and some petrel species as the birds continually circle the ship; a problem which I imagine is also encountered by birdwatchers on the Ocean Weather Ships, and also from fixed oil and gas rigs.

Landbirds, however, seem to be most attracted to a stationary ship, especially at night. I guess alighting is easier with less variable wind currents and updrafts when compared to a moving ship. Unfortunately they seem less inclined to depart, and since most arrive in an exhausted condition there are always casualties despite the average seafarers' best attempts at first aid!

In my experience the best conditions for observing seabirds are for the ship to be steaming at a "moderate" speed, something between 6 knots and 10 knots, within a pre-determined survey area. This will allow the "ship followers" to be counted with a reasonable accuracy, and a watch kept for birds flying past with no apparent interest in the ship. Working within a designated area may permit birdwatching at different times of the day or under various weather conditions, which can make some rudimentary analysis of distribution possible for that particular area.

When counting seabirds, I use the RNBWS Seabird Census forms. This allows for a watch to be maintained for a specific period of time - normally in multiples of 10 minutes. I also try to use a system of keeping a lookout from right ahead to an angle of 90° on each side, ie. from beam to beam through right ahead. This gives a scan ahead of the ship for passing birds, and with an occasional check astern for birds following, it seems to work quite well for counts. This method was suggested to me by the Nature Conservancy Council's Seabirds at Sea Team (SAST), working in the North Sea a few years ago.

Research ships often work in areas which lie outside normal shipping routes. This makes comparison with previous records difficult since there are quite often no previous records. It is usually stated in most seabird field guides that too great reliance should not be placed on distribution maps. This can make life sometimes exciting - a bird out of its normal range will live up a set of observations. Seabird species are notoriously difficult to identify - an unfamiliar bird must invariably be marked as "uncertain", similarly a bird seen out of range is often given the same suffix.

We are sometimes lucky on the research ships, as one or more of the scientists on board may have an interest in the wildlife around the ship. Two pairs of binoculars are always better than one, although a particular sighting may result in a "debate" as to exactly what we are looking at! Very occasionally we carry a professional ornithologist. His or her expertise is invaluable, and I try to make my utmost effort to keep bird watches with them.

Since the nature of the work carried out by the ships is scientific, there is usually interest shown by all personnel on board in the environment in which we are working. Even the most hardened of "seadogs" can usually be found at the ship's rails with the rest of us, and it is not unknown for me to be woken up at some ungodly hour by someone clutching a small ball of feathers!

The ship's scientific library contains a field guide or two, which are usually kept on the bridge and are well thumbed. As watchkeeping officers we are very busy working during sea watches. If the ship is to be kept on station we have constantly to carry out manoeuvres, and monitor the deployment and recovery of scientific equipment. This is additional to our normal watchkeeping duties. Long ocean passages are quite rare, so that any opportunity for birding is usually grasped with both hands, other shipboard duties permitting.

The research ships are quite small, compared with modern merchant ships - the largest of the three operated by the Natural Environment Research Council is RRS *Discovery*, 2321 grt, of 70 metres overall length. This means that they are less stable platforms than larger vessels (research ships are not fitted with stabilisers), which hampers birdwatching in rough weather, wind strength and sea state of force 7 or above. The height of eye from the bridge on *Discovery*, is about 14 metres above the waterline, and is of course less than many commercial ships. This can be to the birdwatcher's advantage, especially when looking at species which stay close to the sea surface, such as storm-petrels and auks. But it can also work to an observer's disadvantage in a seaway as birds disappear behind the wave-tops!

In summary, there are both splendid opportunities, but also some limitations to birdwatching from the research ships operating at sea today.

A.R. Louch, Chalk Cottage, 67 Burnside, Cambridge CB1 3PA.

## NOTES ON SOME SOUTH ATLANTIC BIRD ISLANDS

recorded by H.M.S. *CHALLENGER* - 1872 to 1876

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

The interesting article by Dr. Bourne and Mr. Curtis on South Atlantic Islands in *SEA SWALLOW* 35 prompted me to reread a book which belonged to my grandfather entitled *Notes by a Naturalist on H.M.S. Challenger 1872-1876* by H.N. Moseley, to see if I could discover what changes there have been in 110 years.

Professor Moseley was a typical Victorian naturalist, interested in all aspects of the natural world, but not specifically an ornithologist. I cannot trace some of the latin names that he gives.

H.M.S. *Challenger*, under the command of Captain Sir G.S. Nares, R.N. and Captain F.T. Thomson, R.N., was a main deck corvette with auxiliary steam power. She made a voyage round the world from 21 December 1872 to 24 May 1876 with the object of scientifically investigating the physical conditions and natural history of the deep sea all over the world. The ship was specially fitted with laboratories, and sounding and dredging equipment, and carried a scientific staff under the direction of Sir Charles Wyville Thomson F.R.S.

H.M.S. *Challenger* sailed from Portsmouth, and after visiting various places in the North Atlantic and Caribbean, arrived at St. Paul's Rocks.

**St. Paul's Rocks**, 28/29 August 1873. Birds were seen to be hovering over the islands in thousands. Only three kinds were noted, two noddies *Anous stolidus* (Common Noddy) and "*Anous melanogenys*", which he describes as small terns or sea swallows, black all over with the exception of a small white patch on the head, and the Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. Moseley landed on the main rock which was covered with noddies and their nests, some containing eggs and others with young. The noddies' nests were made of seaweed cemented together with bird dung with a circular platform at the top. They preferred to nest on the cliffs on the sheltered side of the island, but as it was overpopulated many laid where they could, and these nests were not nearly so well made. The rocks were infested with a crab *Grapius strigosus* which fed on many dead birds, and was seen to carry off chicks. The boobies were not nearly as numerous as the noddies, and nested on a white peak on the western side of the island. The nests were mere hollows, some with one egg but most with a single chick of varying age.

**Comment.** Modern reports confirm that both species of noddy still breed there, but in much smaller numbers. I have passed the Rocks several times in the last twenty years, and have never seen birds in "thousands" over them. The peak is still visible, and stated in the *Pilot* to be made white by bird droppings.

**Fernando de Noronha** 1/2 September 1873. The main island was used by the Brazilians as a convict settlement. The woods were full of flocks of reddish-brown doves *Peristera geoffroyi*, which were very tame. A small warbler and a thrush were seen. The Governor of the islands

would not permit exploration on the main island, so they landed on two of the outlying islands where they noted that the principal inhabitants were the same as at St. Paul's Rocks, but also bo'sun birds and frigatebirds, all in vast numbers. He commented that the doves nested amongst the noddies and boobies in complete harmony.

**Comment.** The warbler and thrush mentioned are probably the vireo and tyrant flycatcher in Dr. Bourne's summary. The Blue-faced Booby *Sula dactylatra* breeds here now, and appears to be common as it is frequently mentioned in the Met. Logs of passing ships. It probably bred in Moseley's day, though he did not note it.

The ship next proceeded to Bahia in Brazil, where Moseley was given a free pass on the railway to explore the interior. He commented that, thanks to the energy of the English railway officials, Bass's ale was available at all the stations at the reasonable price of 2s.2d a bottle! From Bahia they went to Tristan da Cunha, noting that the first large seabird, either an albatross or a giant petrel, was seen at 27°43'S.

**Tristan da Cunha**, 15 October 1873. Due to weather conditions he was unable to do much exploring, and only noted a finch. He states the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* was said to nest at the top of the peak, and also the Yellow-billed Albatross *D. culminata*, called Mollymawk by the Tristan people. Cape Pigeons and giant petrels nest, and a specimen of a petrel "*Procellaria glacialis*" was obtained. The natives brought off eggs of the Yellow-billed Albatross for sale, which he said were not bad eating. He offered £1 for a pair of Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes crestatus* with their eggs, and these were obtained for him.

**Inaccessible Island** 16 October 1873. Rockhopper Penguins were the only kind on the island, and were present in millions; they could be heard from the ship screaming all night. The island was covered with a dense tussock-grass, similar in appearance to that of the Falklands but of a different species. The grass grew to over head height, and the penguins nested amongst it, which afforded protection from predatory gulls. From the beach a main road, about a yard wide beaten quite bare by the countless feet, led into the tussock, with smaller lanes leading off at intervals. The birds were very tame and took little notice of the visitors. Off the paths, the nests were so thickly placed that it was impossible to avoid stepping on them, and the nesting birds pecked savagely and painfully at every passerby. In good Victorian fashion, the landing party fought their way through the rookery, lashing out with their clubs. A small finch *Nesospiza acunhoe* and a thrush *Nesocichla eremita* were abundant in the wooded area. He searched for a kind of water rail *Gallinula nesiotis*, but did not find it, and it was reported to be scarce. A prion and a petrel nested in holes on the island in vast numbers, and noddies were numerous. The Antarctic Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus*, which he called the "Predatory Gull", preyed on penguin eggs and young when possible, but their main food appeared to be the prions and petrels, which they dragged from their holes, or pounce on as they emerged. There were wild pigs on the island which had almost exterminated one

rookery, but some penguins had learnt to build in holes under stones where the pigs could not reach them. The Wandering Albatross also nested on this island, near the top.

**Nightingale Island**, 17 October 1873. Most of the island was said to be a vast penguin rookery, but it appeared to be smaller than it had been. Amongst the penguins were numerous nests of the Yellow-billed Albatross. Prions and petrels were not as numerous as on Inaccessible. A few skuas were observed.

**Comment.** Tristan da Cunha has suffered much from increased human population since Moseley's day, and Rockhopper Penguins are no longer present there in millions, however Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands still maintain large populations of birds.

The ship then rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and eventually returned to the South Atlantic via Cape Horn, to reach the Falkland Islands.

**Falkland Islands**, 23 January to 7 February 1876. There were few comments on birds; flocks of wild geese were noted as being tame and feeding close to houses. He visited rookeries of Magellan Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* near Port Stanley, and reported that they make large and deep burrows in the peat banks near the sea shore.

**Comment.** The geese are still present and tame, though in smaller numbers now. While Moseley gives no figures for penguins, I fear they are considerably less now than in his day.

**Ascension Island**, 27 March to 3 April 1876. Moseley visited Boatswain Bird Island and found two kinds of tropicbirds, a species of noddy, and a beautiful snow white tern. On the flat summit of the island the Brown Booby, and a gannet "*Sula piscatrix*", and the frigatebird bred. A single Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* was found nesting on Boatswain Bird Island. "Wideawake Fair" on Ascension was visited, and he commented that there were millions of Sooty Terns nesting there.

**Comment.** Boatswain Bird Island still appears to be a thriving bird colony, and "Wideawake Fair" is said to be even larger, and a spectacular sight despite predations by feral cats.

**Conclusion.** I can commend this book for anyone who can get their hands on a copy. Not only is it a fascinating account of a very long voyage, but for those with an interest in trying to predict the prospects for birdlife in the century ahead, a glimpse of how things were over 100 years ago can be most illuminating. Professor Moseley was a keen and observant naturalist; if he had been a trained ornithologist, what a unique and valuable record we would have had.

#### REFERENCE

Moseley, H.N. 1892. *Notes by a Naturalist. An account of observations made during the voyage of H.M.S. Challenger round the World in the years 1872-1876.* John Murray, London.

Captain P.W.G Chilman, M.N., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York YO2 1SF.

## SHORT NOTES

### FIRST OCCURRENCE OF BULLER'S ALBATROSS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

By Radio Officer W.F. Curtis

Whilst en route from Port Stanley to Fox Bay on 28 March 1987 more than usual numbers of seabirds were encountered at the southern entrance to the Falkland Sound. This area has long been acknowledged as an area of seabird concentrations owing to the combination of prevailing winds, ocean currents and the proximity of the 100 fathom line resulting in upwelling of water. During the period 0900-1000 I counted: some 700 Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophris*, 81 Royal Albatrosses *D. epomophora*, five Shy Albatrosses *D. cauta*, and three Buller's Albatrosses *D. bulleri*. Shy Albatrosses have been recorded off the Falkland Islands on some ten occasions since the first in 1984, following the first record for the southwestern Atlantic, a single bird on Bird Island, South Georgia in 1982. The Buller's Albatrosses, one adult and two immatures, constitute the first known record for the Atlantic Ocean.

The first impression of these birds was of a small mollymawk with predominantly white underwings, giving rise to thoughts of Yellow-nosed Albatross *D. chlororhynchos* (itself a rarity in these high latitudes). But almost immediately the very dark head, face and neck of two of the birds was apparent - thus Buller's became the logical deduction. The following notes were taken during the ensuing few minutes:- "Smallish mollymawk, the impression being smaller than the accompanying Black-browed: particularly the wings appeared shorter, broader and blunter tipped. The upperwings and mantle were blackish/brown with the webs of the primaries pale though not as noticeable as on Black-browed. Lower back, rump and upper tail white; broad blackish terminal band to tail. Head, sides of face, neck and throat dark grey, slightly paler towards the lower nape. Forehead noticeably white, extending onto forepart of crown. Underwings white with narrow dark edges, the leading edge being slightly broader than trailing edge. Bill blackish with bright yellowish culminicorn, nail and ramicorn (adult); almost uniformly brownish/black (immature). Heads of the immatures more uniformly dark grey, underwings slightly more dark along the edges. The adult and one immature seen down to 250 yards, the second immature to about 350 yards".

Buller's Albatross was first described by Rothschild in 1893 in the Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club. Until thus described, no distinction had been made between this species and the Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*. This confusion continued for some years with the first record of this species collected on the west coast of South America (near Iquique, Chile) being recorded as "*D. platei*"; the specimen, an immature Buller's being in the Berlin Museum. During the Brewster-Sanford Expedition of 1913/14 Rollo Beck collected three further examples of this species from southern Peru and Chile, thus indicating that birds from the breeding grounds off New Zealand dispers-

ed eastwards to South America; not until quite recently has it been reported regularly in small numbers off southwestern Australia and Tasmania. It is still not regarded as being common off South America, with the majority of records from central Chile northwards; this distribution suggests that the species occupies a similar niche in the warmer waters of the South Pacific as does the Yellow-nosed in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The three birds recorded off the Falkland Islands, as well as being the first in the Atlantic Ocean, must also be one of the most southerly records of this species.

The weather in the Cape Horn region during the preceding weeks had not been unusual, though a rather intense low pressure system was stationary in the Bellingshausen Sea some six days previously, producing a northerly airstream of at least gale force off southern Chile and Drake's Passage, before moving rapidly eastwards across the Antarctic Peninsula. This resulted in west to southwest winds of force 8 to 10 off Cape Horn and the Falkland Islands.

## AN EXAMPLE OF MELANISM IN WILSON'S STORM-PETREL

By Radio Officer W.F. Curtis

Bourne (1987) describes a partially melanistic example of Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* exhibiting some plumage features similar to those of Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. On 31 January 1987, in position 40 miles northwest of Bird Island, South Georgia, a further example of melanism in Wilson's Storm-Petrel was recorded. The individual was observed initially at a distance of 70 yards from a height of 25 feet, closing to no more than 20 yards as the bird flew alongside the ship. In all respects of size, structure and flight, the bird was indistinguishable from the many other Wilson's Storm-Petrels seen that day, and during the previous 25 years. The plumage of the upperparts differed in that the rump was almost the same colour as the rest of the upperparts, with only the faintest suggestion of being paler, whilst the upperwings were uniformly dark, with no trace of a paler bar on the greater coverts normally exhibited by this species. The feet were noted to extend appreciably beyond the tail, and appeared to be all dark, though the amount of yellow on the webs recorded on birds handled in South Georgia in 1986 was found to be extremely variable.

Little was recorded of the underparts of the bird except being all dark. The observation took place in strong sunlight with a westerly gale blowing.

### REFERENCE

Bourne, W.R.P. 1987. Parallel variation in the markings of Wilson's and Leach's Storm-Petrels. *Sea Swallow* 36:64.

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## WAS IT A BROWN-HOODED OR A FRANKLIN'S GULL AT SOUTH GEORGIA?

By Dr. W.R.P. Bourne

On the afternoon of 21 May 1987 the staff of the British Antarctic Survey had a brief view of a small, grey-backed gull over Bird Island, South Georgia. It appeared smaller than adjacent skuas *Catharacta skua* and Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*, but slightly larger than Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata*, with longer and broader wings and a less buoyant flight, rather like a Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. The underparts were pure white, the wings silvery-grey above with indistinct black tips to the outer primaries and probably two "mirrors", the tail and rump white, and the head white with an obvious dark bar at the hind edge of the ear coverts and a black spot above the eye. After considering most of the small gulls in the world it was identified as a Brown-hooded (or Patagonian Black-headed) Gull *Larus maculipennis* (*Br. Antarct. Surv. Bull.* 78: 53-53, 1988).

There are some drawbacks to this identification. It is stated during the discussion that "Black-headed and Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. ridibundus* and *L. philadelphia*) have much less black on the wing and a head pattern rather similar to that described here, but both have very conspicuous white leading edges to the wing, forming a clearly visible patch. The primaries of our bird had a dark stripe along their entire length, producing a much more streaked effect than in these two species... The field description fits Brown-hooded Gull best of all, except in one respect, the presence of possible "mirrors" on the upperwing. However, this species is known to have particularly variable markings on the primary tips... the range of the Brown-hooded Gull as makes it far the most likely..."

In point of fact the Brown-hooded Gull appears rather closely related to the Black-headed Gull, with an equally terrestrial type of distribution, and differs from it mainly in being paler, with more extensive white and reduced markings, so that, for instance, it is often difficult to see the dark primary tips, which I did not find unusually variable at all. This description is quite unacceptable for the Brown-hooded Gull in the absence of any mention of the fact that it has an even more marked white forewing than the Black-headed Gull, but would be much more acceptable for a (possibly moulting?) sub-adult Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* of the type shown in figure 505 of Peter Harrison's *Seabirds of the World: A Photographic Guide* (Christopher Helm, London, 1986). This is a much more mobile, marine species, which in addition to migrating from North America all down the west coast of South America, has already wandered to the Falklands, Tristan da Cunha, South Africa and probably Australia. Thus it seems a much more likely species to reach South Georgia, where it would also be a first record.

## HERRING AND LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS NESTING IN ROSYTH DOCKYARD

by Dr. W.R.P. Bourne

Rosyth Royal Naval Dockyard consists of about five square kilometres of large buildings protected from disturbance by police manning a fence on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, just west of the bridges. It has a local nature reserve, and the staff include a number of birdwatchers, but nobody appears to have paid much attention to the gulls. When I was sent to re-store a ship there in early July 1988 they seemed remarkably tame and numerous, so I had a look around from the ship's bridge, which provided an unusually convenient vantage point. I was rather startled to see a Lesser Black-backed Gull eyeing me in a bored manner from a nest on a ventilator on the nearest building about ten metres away, and an infinitely receding vista of other breeding Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Their chicks were distributed all over the ridged rooftops of the warehouses.

It was difficult to see the birds from the ground, and while many of the roofs are accessible, it would have been impossible to examine them all, so I counted the birds from a distance. They spent much of the morning away feeding, but the numbers built up during the afternoon, when I saw a maximum of 550 adults standing on and flying over the rooftops, with more hidden in the dips. Sample counts revealed a total of 79 Herring Gulls and 76 Lesser Black-backs, fairly equally distributed all over the dockyard, though small groups tended to occur together. Many of them had nests, including well over a hundred of each species; about half the birds were still incubating, while the rest had chicks of different sizes up to half-grown. This suggests that many birds may have lost earlier clutches, though no one I met was aware of either egg-collecting or control measures.

Dr. W.R.P. Bourne, 3 Contlaw Place, Milltimber, Aberdeen AB1 0DS.

## A SHY ALBATROSS OFF SOMALIA

By Piet and Kathy Meeth

On our way from Singapore homeward bound by container vessel *Nedlloyd Houtman* we passed The Brothers, Socotra during the morning of 18 September 1986. The ship's noon position was 11°44'N 53°07'E, 55nm SW of Socotra. The seawater temperature was 23.5°C which was considerably lower than the previous day (27°C) and the following day (30°C). The wind was SW force 4; it was towards the end of the SW monsoon. During the early part of the day we saw large numbers of the normal species for the area until at 1555, whilst observing a party of terns and dark petrels feeding on a shoal of fish, we were suddenly highly surprised to see a soaring and banking albatross.

The ship's position at this time was 11°50'N 51°35'E, 18nm NE of Cape Guardafui, Somalia. The sea was choppy and the wind was estimated at force 5. Although the bird was too far away to see all the plumage details we noted the following main characteristics:

It was a large, long-winged albatross. The upperwing and back were sooty grey, crown of head and cheeks were light grey. The large white rump was conspicuous. The underparts were white except black wing-tips, and a very thin dark leading and trailing edge. The bill was grey. These main characteristics, as well as the typical "jizz" (head and neck held a little forward and down) led us to identify the bird as a Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. The bird was too far away to see the diagnostic "thumbmark" on the underwing.

COMMENT. It is interesting to note that less than two months later a near adult female Shy Albatross *D.c. cauta* was caught in fishing nets off Mombasa (G.R. Cunningham-van Someren, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 108:18-19). In addition, another Shy Albatross *D.c. cauta* was seen in the Gulf of Aqaba on 20 February 1981, and found dead 15 days later on 7 March (M.C. Jennings, *Saudi Arabia Nat. Hist. Soc. J.* 2(4): 14: 14-17).

P. & K. Meeth, Bramenlaan 5, 2116 TR Bentveld, The Netherlands.

## BOOK REVIEW

Patrick O'Brian 1987. JOSEPH BANKS A LIFE. Collins Harvill, London. Price £15

There have been four biographies of Joseph Banks but none, it is suggested, will be more enjoyed by readers of this journal than that by Patrick O'Brian. When James Cook, then a Master in the Royal Navy, was commissioned as a Lieutenant in 1768 and given command of the *Endeavour*, Joseph Banks and his party of eight were victualled on board as Supernumeraries for a voyage to the Pacific to observe the passage of Venus from Tahiti. Banks, then a young man of 25, was a member of the Royal Society and highly regarded by his peers as a naturalist, but it was perhaps somewhat quixotic of Their Lordships at the Admiralty to instruct Cook, after the observations of Venus, to proceed under the direction of Mr Banks "on further discoveries of the Southern Continent...".

In the bicentennial year of the European settlement of that continent it is appropriate to read of the *Endeavour's* exploration along its coasts and to enjoy Banks' vivid accounts of all the natural wonders encountered on the way, and the *Endeavour's* subsequent circumnavigation of the world. He noted the varied birdlife seen on passage and the author is quick to reassure his readers "who find the number of birds he (Banks) killed distressing, it may be some little comfort to know that having been measured, weighed, scientifically described, and sometimes drawn they were at least eaten". On page 85 Banks, after a bilious attack, felt well enough to tackle part of an albatross, and goes on to describe how best to prepare it for the table and make use of all of it - from the feet to the beak!

He maintained his interest in Australia to the end of his life and has been described as the father of Australia, being consulted by the British Government and others with reference to many facets of its development from the time of the First Fleet.

All this is described in felicitous prose by Patrick O'Brian with extensive quotations from his subject's voluminous correspondence with all sorts of people on all sorts of business, from which Banks emerges as a cheerful, friendly man with a genius for helping others. As the author of ten remarkable and most readable novels on the war at sea during the early nineteenth century, O'Brian has drawn upon his wide-ranging researches into the navy of that time and contemporary natural history. This biography is of interest to all seaman, especially those with an interest in the birds of the southern oceans.

Peter Cunningham, 'Aros', 10 Barony Square, Stornaway, Isle of Lewis PA87 2TQ.



“The Wild Goose Chase”

Photo: Ldg. Airman (Phot) A. I. Reid  
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## SEA SWALLOW INDEX ERRATA

Please amend the following errors in the text on copies already received.

- Page 4 Bourne, W. R. P. Third entry down should be dated 1959 not 1958 (*Sea Swallow* 12).
- Page 29 Tuck, G. S. 1961 Random reports *Sea Swallow* 14:41-42 not 41-45.
- Page 32 Watts, B., Watts E. 1979 Birdwatching in the Seychelles Volume number should be 28 not 31.
- Page 39 *Asio* page numbers of Vol. 29 are recorded twice.
- Page 40 *Avocetta recurvirostra* should be *Recurvirostra avocetta* which see.
- Page 57 introduce *Gullaris schistacea* = *Demegretta asha* see page 49. after *Grus*.
- Page 63 *sabini* references for Vol. 23 should read 23:30T, 32T, 33. not 23:30T, 23T, 33.
- Page 67 *oceanicus* Vol. 6 should read 6:15. not 6:15, 7. Vol. 21 should read 21:9, 13, 14, etc. cut out 18T.
- Page 67 *exasperatus* should read *oceanicus exasperatus*.
- Page 81 *Recurvirostra avocetta* add 4:21, 23. to page numbers.
- Page 94 *Agrobates galactotes* (Rufous Bush Chat not Robin).
- Page 97 *Cercotrichas galactotes* (Rufous Bush Chat not Robin) listed page numbers are slightly mixed up and should read: 11:37, 12:34, 16:49, 33:32.
- Page 98 *Coccythraustes verpertina* should be Evening Crossbeak not Crossbill.
- Page 109 *Motacilla flava* last volume number is 34. not 24.
- Page 110 *Muscicapa striata* page numbers for Volume 28 are repeated.
- Page 111 *Oenanthe hispanica* page numbers are mixed up and should read 9:21, 23:63, 28:39, 40, 29:32, 42, 31:26.
- Page 114 *Pitta brachyura* is the Fairy not the Blue-winged Pitta.
- Page 119 *Sylvia melanocephala* page numbers for volume 5 should be 18, and 19.

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Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

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

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st March**.

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