

FIRST BREEDING RECORDS OF GREYHEADED GULLS *LARUS CIRROCEPHALUS*
FROM THE EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

In July 1982 a colony of Greyheaded Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus* was found breeding at the Swartkops River estuary (33 50S, 25 35E) near Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape, South Africa. Breeding activity was first noticed on 10 July 1982 when nests containing eggs were found. Between then and early November the colony was visited six times. Nests with eggs were present on all visits between mid-July and mid-October, suggesting that replacement laying after clutch failure had occurred. The last nest with eggs was recorded on 19 October 1982 when there was a single nest with three eggs, one of which was pipping. The maximum count of occupied nests was made on 1 October 1982 when there were 28 nests with eggs. The maximum number of Greyheaded Gulls was 68 on 11 July 1982. Seventeen chicks were ringed, but since several were missed this does not represent total chick production.

The breeding area was in the flood plain of the Swartkops River near the settlement of Redhouse. The gulls had made their nests on the low island (c. 0,5 ha) in a primary settling pan (c. 30 ha) used in the production of salt. The island was mostly bare with a substrate of sand and mud, but in places there was a low growth of vegetation. There was another larger island (c. 1,2 ha) and several very much smaller islands in the settling pan, none of which had breeding gulls present. The pan varied in depth from c. 0,5 m to 1,5 m at the time. The area falls under the jurisdiction of the Port Elizabeth Municipality, but has been leased to a private company (Cerebos Food Comp. Ltd). Access to the area is restricted to holders of permits issued by the company. No adverse effects resulting from the activities of the company were noted; rather, their activities may be beneficial in that they maintain the dam walls of the settling pan and thereby prevent the pan from draining.

Greyheaded Gulls are commonly seen at the beachfront in Port Elizabeth and occasionally at islands in Algoa Bay (Randall *et al.* 1981). Based on a survey of birds along the southern and eastern Cape coasts in January 1979, Underhill *et al.* (1980) considered the population of Greyheaded Gulls in the Port Elizabeth area to be isolated. By contrast Skead (1967) stated that the species was likely to occur anywhere along the coast, or inland, in the eastern Cape, although it was uncommon. As far as can be established, this is the first breeding record for the species from the eastern Cape. The nearest coastal colonies are St Lucia in Natal (Berruti 1980) and De Hoop Vlei in the Bredasdorp district, southern Cape (Uys & Macleod 1967). The largest coastal breeding population is that at St Lucia where an estimated 300 pairs occur (Berruti 1980). Very much larger populations occur inland, particularly in the Transvaal (Hunter 1972). Winter and spring breeding as recorded in the Swartkops River estuary is the same as that at St Lucia and elsewhere in southern Africa (Mclachlan & Liversidge 1978; Berruti 1980).

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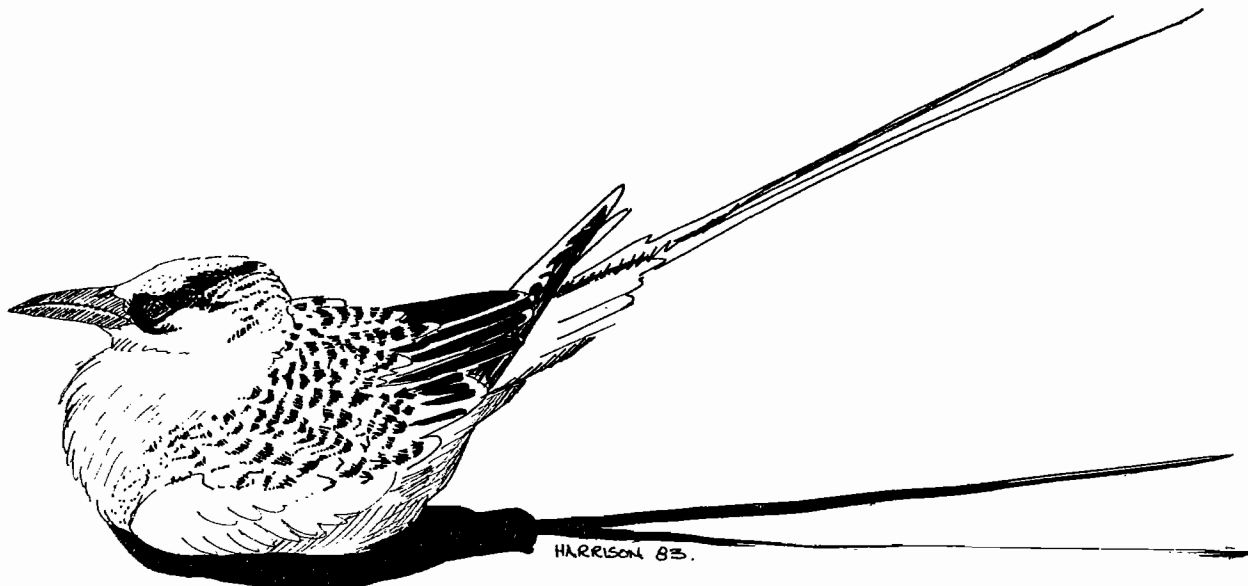
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Red-billed Tropicbird.

SEABIRDS OBSERVED AT BEIRA, MOZAMBIQUE, IN LATE MARCH 1961

The late R.P. Borrett whose notes are in the FitzPatrick Institute library visited Beira (19 49S, 34 52E), Mozambique, and observed sea and other birds between 25 and 28 March 1961. Brooke *et al.* (1981) were not aware of these records from an inadequately studied part of southern Africa and so did not include them in their review of unpublished and recent records of seabirds in Mozambique south of the Zambezi estuary. RPB's observations are given although no new species are added to the Beira list. The opportunity is taken to list the months in which the seabirds he saw have been observed at Beira since March is a month in which few observations have been made there. RPB observed -

Pinkbacked Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* four loafing on an off-shore wreck on 26 March and one on a riverine mudbank on 27 March. Now recorded March - May, July - September, November and December (Winterbottom 1936 *sub nom.* *P. roseus*, a synonym of *P. onocrotalus*, Chapin & Amadon 1952, Long 1964, Brooke *et al.* 1981).

Lesser Blackbacked Gull *Larus fuscus* several at sea : they had noticeably yellow legs, cf. Clancey (1971: 164). Months of record are given in Brooke *et al.* (1981).

Greyheaded Gull *L. cirrocephalus* present. Now recorded January, March, May, July, August, November, December (Winterbottom 1936, Benson 1948, Worth 1960, Sinclair 1979, Brooke *et al.* 1981). Although Worth (1960) and Brooke *et al.* (1981) give maximum counts of c. 300 birds, their breeding grounds are unknown since no Transvaal ringed birds have been recovered there (Brooke *et al.* 1981).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* several seen singly offshore. Now recorded March - May, August, September and December (Long 1964, Britton 1967, Brooke *et al.* 1981).

Swift Tern *S. bergii* groups offshore. Now recorded March - May, August, November and December (Winterbottom 1936 *sub nom.* *S. cristata*, Long 1964, Britton 1967, Sinclair 1979, Brooke *et al.* 1981).

Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis* one offshore on 25 March. Now recorded March - May, August and December (Benson 1936, Britton 1967, Brooke *et al.* 1981).

Little Tern *S. albifrons* c. 100 in various sized flocks offshore. Many had yellow bills with black tips, i.e. breeding plumage, but others had apparently all black bills, i.e. nonbreeding or immature plumage (Harrison 1983). The largest number previously reported was c. 60 by Britton (1967). Now recorded March - May, August and December (Benson 1936, Britton 1967, Brooke *et al.* 1981).

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*R.P. Borrett, late of Zimbabwe (cf. 1973 *Bokmakierie* 25: 38).*

SECOND RECORD OF MAINLAND BREEDING BY THE JACKASS PENGUIN
SPHENISCUS DEMERSUS

Mainland breeding by the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* has only been recorded once previously (Broni 1982, *Cormorant* 10: 120).

Another record of the Jackass Penguin attempting to breed on the mainland took place in May or June 1981 at Cape Recife (34 02S, 25 42E), eastern Cape, South Africa (H. Clapton, pers. comm.). An egg was discovered in a nook on a three-metre high rock outcrop, and three adult birds were present. The outcome of this breeding attempt is not known. Jackass Penguins are frequently seen at sea near Cape Recife and they breed on all the islands in Algoa Bay (Randall *et al.* 1981, *Cormorant* 9: 85-104). The nearest of these islands is 24 km from Cape Recife.

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AN APPARENT INSTANCE OF COURTSHIP FEEDING IN THE
JACKASS PENGUIN *SPHENISCUS DEMERSUS*

Courtship feeding in birds is defined as the feeding of one member of an adult pair by the other (Thomson 1964). It is usually most frequent before or during the period of copulation and egg laying, but often continues during incubation. The habit is widespread among many orders of birds (Lack 1940), but appears to be unrecorded in the penguins *Sphenisciformes*, although the Adélie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae* performs an analogous behaviour whereby the male brings snow to the incubating female (Murphy 1936).

On 11 March 1983, during a study of Jackass Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* on Marcus Island (33 03S, 17 58E), Saldanha Bay, South Africa, I observed a breeding pair of birds which at first sight were seemingly engaged in allopreening, a common behaviour pattern in this species (Eggleton & Siegfried 1979). The incubating female was prostrate on the nest with her head and neck stretched upwards towards the male, which was standing next to the nest with his head low over her and pointing downwards. The male then opened his beak and the female proceeded to nibble at the inside of his mouth. Following this nibbling which ceased after a few moments, the female engaged in rapid throat movements reminiscent of swallowing. When I subsequently approached the spot I noticed small patches of partially digested food lying at the edge of the nest; these could not have been the remains of a previous chick meal since the nest only contained eggs.

The postures and movements of this male and female were very similar to those exhibited by adult and nestling Jackass Penguins respectively during chick feeding. On returning from foraging at sea, adult Jackass Penguins feed their chicks by regurgitation. This behaviour is initiated by the chick calling and nibbling at the neck of the adult, whereupon the latter brings food up into its mouth, held open above the waiting chick, which feeds by gulping at the proffered food (Thomson 1964, pers. obs.).

The above incident may represent the first direct observation of courtship feeding by a penguin. During an earlier study on the Jackass Penguin at Marcus Island in 1980-81 R.P. Wilson (pers. comm.) reports having encountered an adult, which he knew had been on the nest all day, smeared with mucous around its mouth shortly after the return of its mate from foraging at sea. Although the lack of previous published observations of courtship feeding in a species as well studied as the Jackass Penguin implies that it is at most a rare occurrence, it remains possible that the behaviour has been overlooked in the past because of its unobtrusive nature.

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NEW BREEDING LOCALITY DATA FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN SEABIRDS

Whitebreasted Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Sixty breeding localities are known for the Whitebreasted Cormorant on the southern African coast (Brooke *et al.* 1982, *Gerfaut* 72: 188-200; Boshoff & Riekert 1982, *Cormorant* 10: 125). A 61st locality is the Strandfontein Sewage Works (34 05S, 18 31E) where I observed a single nest containing two young in a dead tree on a sandy island in a tertiary pond on 20 February 1983. On 20 January 1983 at this locality two nests were present, one with two eggs and one with four young (A. Brown & H. Gottschalk, Southern African Ornithological Society nest record card).

Brooke *et al.* (1982) give the 1920s as the last time Whitebreasted Cormorants have been recorded breeding on Malgas Island (33 03S, 17 55E). This is incorrect since a photograph taken on 30 November 1938 at this locality reveals the presence of at least eight occupied nests (Coles 1941, *J. S. Afr. Veter. Med. Assoc.* 12: 23-30). Whitebreasted Cormorants do not now breed at Malgas Island (pers. obs.).

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Crowned Cormorant

Phalacrocorax coronatus

Thirty-nine breeding localities are known for the Crowned Cormorant (Cooper 1981, *Cormorant* 10: 57 and references therein). A 40th locality is Hospital Rock (32 57S, 17 52E) where I observed six occupied nests, probably containing eggs, on 22 August 1983.

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CARRION FEEDING BY KELP GULLS *LARUS DOMINICANUS* IN
PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

While travelling overland through Argentine Patagonia between Comodoro Rivadavia and Rio Gallegos in December 1981 we noted Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* feeding on road kills, mainly rabbits or hares and the occasional sheep, at distances of up to 50 km from the sea or river valleys. Carrion eating by Kelp Gulls in Patagonia is commonplace (Murphy 1936) as it is further north in Argentina and in Uruguay (Escalante 1970). The main highway through Patagonia runs roughly parallel to the coast and up to 60 km from it. Whenever a river valley was approached its proximity was indicated, from up to 50 km but more usually c. 25 km away, by the presence of Kelp Gulls along the road. The numbers of these gulls increased as the valley was approached. The furthest inland that we noted Kelp Gulls was at Calafate (50 19S, 72 15W) on the shores of Lago Argentino approximately 220 km from the Atlantic coast : a solitary specimen was sighted in company with a flock of c. 100 Brownhooded Gulls *L. maculipennis* feeding on the municipal rubbish dump. No gulls of any species were seen at Lago Futulaufquen near Esquel (42 50S, 71 30W) in Chubut Province, northern Patagonia. It seems likely, therefore, that the Kelp Gull mainly exploits the country surrounding the lower reaches of the rivers draining eastwards across Patagonia.

Inland foraging by Kelp Gulls in South America contrasts strongly with the situation in southern Africa where the species is normally confined to the coast and rarely penetrates any distance inland (Brooke & Cooper 1979, Cooper & Cooper 1982, Ryan & Furness 1982). In southern Africa, it is far less dependent on offal and refuse tips than is the sympatric Hartlaub's Gull *L. hartlaubii* (Brooke & Cooper 1979). The only definite southern African record of Kelp Gulls feeding inland at a mammalian (sheep) carcass is that of Cooper & Cooper (1982). However, on several occasions during 1980-1982 Kelp Gulls have been seen flying above the west coast highway approximately 6 km inland from Langebaan Lagoon, western Cape. These may have been attracted by the road kills that are often present (J. Cooper, pers. comm.).

It would appear that in Patagonia Kelp Gulls penetrate inland via the river valleys and then radiate out along roads in search of food. Further south, in Tierra del Fuego, Kelp Gulls commonly occur in the vicinity of meat refrigeration plants. They also cause considerable damage to the wool industry by attacking newly born lambs or sick and debilitated sheep (Johnson 1967, Humphrey *et al.* 1970). In Patagonia, road kills and dead domestic livestock were not seen to be exploited by any other bird. Not one Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* was seen in Patagonia despite the range given for it in Meyer de Schauensee (1966) and Brown & Amadon (1968). However, Stresemann & Amadon (1979) do not include Patagonia in the range of any new world (= cathartid) vulture except that of the rare Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*. It is probable that the new world vultures have been extirpated from Patagonia as the result of the extensive use of pesticides for the control of livestock parasites (D.C. Duffy pers. comm.). The absence of crows from

South America (Meyer de Schauensee 1966) further reduces the competition for carrion faced by Kelp Gulls. By contrast, in southern Africa crows *Corvus* spp. and other carrion feeders are present.

A comparison of marine food resources available to Kelp Gulls might show that southern African shores are richer than those of Patagonia despite the fact that upwelling also occurs along the coast of Argentina (Cooke & Mills 1972). The main concentrations of Kelp Gulls in southern Africa are along the west and south coasts (Crawford *et al.* 1982). These are regions of high productivity due to upwelling where large numbers of sand mussels *Donax serra* and other intertidal invertebrates are available to gulls. Thus there may be less incentive for Kelp Gulls to penetrate inland in southern Africa in search of food, particularly if they have to compete with other carrion feeders.

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NEW DATA ON RARELY RECORDED SEABIRDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Macaroni Penguin

Eudyptes chrysolophus

Four records of the Macaroni Penguin ashore in South Africa exist (Berruti 1982, *Cormorant* 10: 55). A fifth individual was collected alive from the beach at Platboompunt (34 20S, 18 27E), southwestern Cape by Mr O.M. von Kaschke on 27 February 1983. The bird was taken to the SANCCOB Rescue Station on 28 February 1983 when it weighed 3 850 g. I examined it on 2 March 1983 and found it to be a moulting juvenile (based on its short old head plumes). It was thin and had a missing outer toe on the left foot, apparently a recent injury. Its culmen was 61 mm and bill depth at the gonys was 20 mm. A photograph of the bird appeared in the *Cape Times* of 2 March 1983. The bird died on 20 March 1983. The specimen has been deposited in the osteological collection of the South African Museum. Of the five records for South Africa now existing all are of moulting birds in the months February to April.

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Blue Petrel

Halobaena caerulea

Two records of the Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* can be added to the 21 previously published (Every *et al.* 1981, *Cormorant* 9: 19-22; Cooper 1982, *Cormorant* 10: 55). On 16 June 1982 S. Broni and G. la Cock found a rotten corpse on Dyer Island (34 41S, 19 25E) which was not preserved. Smith (1840, Illustrations of the zoology of South Africa Aves pl. 53) illustrates a Blue Petrel *sub nom. Procellaria forsteri* Smith, *nec* Latham, one of several obtained at sea off the west and south coasts of what is now the Cape Province, a record overlooked by Every *et al.* (*op.cit.*) in their review.

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THE EFFECT OF UNDERWATER EXPLOSIONS ON ROCKHOPPER PENGUINS
EUDYPTES CHRYSOCOME

Mortality of penguins and other seabirds as a result of underwater explosions has recently been reported by Cooper (1982, *Cormorant* 10: 109). While at Subantarctic Marion Island (46 52S, 37 51E) we had occasion to observe the effect of underwater explosions on Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome*.

During May 1982, a series of small blasts were detonated to break up a large, submerged rock at Transvaal Cove which had been a source of hindrance and danger during loading operations. Although by this date most of the penguins had left the island, a number of postmoult birds were still making regular short trips to sea. Access to the landing beach for these birds, which breed in the vicinity of the meteorological base, necessitated passing over, or close to, the submerged rock. For this reason, prior to blasting, "thunderflashes" were thrown into the sea to scare off any birds in the nearby vicinity. This precaution proved effective for penguins in the immediate area, and penguins resting on the surface nearby showed no ill effects from the blasts but porpoised away in alarm. However, after one blast several penguins were seen floating on the sea surface. It is evident that these had been approaching the landing beach from around the headland, underwater, and we estimated that they were within 20 m of the blast centre at the time of detonation. The maximum water depth in the immediate vicinity was about four metres. Although shaped charges were used and part of the force of the blast was dissipated above the surface of the water, it is possible that the shallowness of the water resulted in a considerable lateral shockwave.

Seven Rockhopper Penguins were recovered by divers and all were alive on recovery but showed signs of severe concussion with little co-ordinated muscular control. All died within 15 minutes of recovery. A further two penguins were attacked and killed by giant petrels (*Macronectes* spp.) before they could be recovered. No post mortems were carried out on the recovered birds.

It appears that penguins underwater in the vicinity of blasting operations are more susceptible to the blast effects than are birds on the surface.

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THE DENSTONE EXPEDITION TO INACCESSIBLE ISLAND

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Often supporting large numbers of nesting seabirds and sometimes with their own peculiar brand of land birds, islands have always held a fascination for the ornithologist. It would be hard to find an island more fascinating than Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha group, South Atlantic. Not without some surprise I found myself heading out of Cape Town with the Denstone Expedition in early October 1982. Having just completed a four-month stint on a tiny Scottish island (population : five humans, c. 17 000 birds) I was relishing the prospect of getting to grips with some of the Southern Ocean seabirds to replace the northern auks, cormorants and gulls which I had left behind.

The voyage on the M.V. *S.A. Agulhas* was a most important period of familiarization and we were indeed fortunate to have four ornithologists from the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, on board who made the task of identifying the tricky species so much easier. Soon we were becoming almost blasé about species which, when seen in Britain, cause major excitement : Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis*, Wilson's Stormpetrels *Oceanites oceanicus* and Blackbrowed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophris*. In addition, of course, there were also the many species which have never been recorded in British or even European waters : the majestic Shy Albatross *D. cauta*, elegant Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata* and the diminutive Greybacked Stormpetrels *Garrodia nereis*. Many of the smaller species came on board, attracted to the ship's lights on misty wet nights, giving the opportunity for detailed examination in the hand. And how many people can say that they have had a Broadbilled Prion *Pachyptila vittata* land in their gin and tonic?

And so to Inaccessible. It is convenient at this point to divide the report into the categories into which our work fell.

SEABIRDS

Virtually the entire world population of Great Shearwaters breeds within the Tristan group and on Gough Island and the islanders frequently commented on how much the species had increased over recent years. The numbers on Inaccessible were clearly enormous, but attempts to get some idea of the actual size of the population were hampered by the thick tussock and poor weather at the critical time. However, some counting of occupied burrows within measured quadrats was carried out giving at least an indication of the density of nests within different habitats. Much easier to survey were Yellownosed Albatrosses *D. chlororhynchos* and most of the island was covered in a census of this species. Sooty Albatrosses *Phoebastria fusca* present in much smaller numbers were also counted. Four pairs of Wandering Albatrosses *D. exulans* were found, the relict of what was at one time a much larger population. Now, with legislative protection the main threat to the gonies' survival, persecution by man, has been lifted and the birds will hopefully increase in numbers, albeit very slowly.

Other breeding species included Subantarctic Skuas *Catharacta antarctica* scattered thinly over the island, the only concentration being on the bog at Blenden Hall. Pellets collected at this site for dietary analysis show that storm-petrels are the most important constituent in the diet of the Subantarctic Skua at Inaccessible.

Birds attracted to the hut's tilley lamps on misty nights were the subject of a programme of biometrics to clarify the sub-specific status or otherwise of some species. Ectoparasites were also removed from these birds while they were in the hand. Breeding condition was recorded to confirm the suspected nesting of some species, including the Whitebellied Stormpetrel *Fregatta grallaria* which for a long time tantalized us with its "Piccolo in F" whistle.

RESIDENT LANDBIRDS

Inaccessible Island supports four species peculiar to the Tristan group : Tristan *Nesospiza acunhae* and Wilkin's *N. wilkinsi* Buntings, Tristan Thrush (Starchy) *Nesocichla eremita* and a flightless rail *Atlantisia rogersi*, the latter restricted to Inaccessible itself. Little is known about these endemics so virtually any information obtained would be breaking new ground. Work began with a detailed study of the Tristan Bunting, which was very common in the Blenden Hall tussock. Systematic watches were maintained to record every stage of the breeding cycle from courtship through nest building, incubation and rearing of the young. The incubation and fledging periods were ascertained for the first time, but only just, as the Starchies did their best to ruin our work by enthusiastically devouring eggs and young alike. An interesting observation was that the bright "variety" of Tristan Bunting, thought to be an age-related plumage phase, was in fact producing bright coloured young, in contrast to the dull chicks of the dull "variety" (previously taken to be an immature phase). Separation of the two phases by distribution and ecotype was also evident - the bright bunting living exclusively in the *Blechnum palmiforme* and *Phyllica arborea* on the summit plateau and the dull ones being found only in the uniform *Spartina arundinacea* tussock and scattered *Phyllica* of the lower slopes, particularly at Blenden Hall. Further investigation will be required to determine the taxonomic status of these buntings on Inaccessible.

Wilkin's Bunting, the heavy-billed species, remained elusive during our stay, generally being found feeding quietly in the *Phyllica*. Ten were colour marked at Wilkin's Copse on Blenden Hall, but only one was seen again indicating a mobile population even during the breeding season.

Far more conspicuous were the Starchies. Inquisitive birds, they soon learned to associate the hut with food and their tameness resulted in a number of colour-banded birds being available for study. Although many obviously had nests (seen carrying building material or food) only one nest was in fact found, the dense tussock providing effective cover. This nest contained two newly hatched chicks which were measured regularly and their progress recorded until fledging. This was the first time that

the young of this species have been described. Attendance patterns of the adults were monitored in a series of nest watches, both parents being ringed.

Territoriality of the Inaccessible Island Flightless Rail was studied by plotting calling birds, and the discovery of two nests with eggs gave the unprecedented opportunity to examine incubation regimes and the post-hatching behaviour of the chicks and their parents. Biometrics of individual young gave figures for growth rates and single birds and family parties were followed in the field to determine movements. The Starchies again seriously affected this work by killing almost all our colour-banded chicks.

VAGRANTS

Two Whiterumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* (one adult and one first-winter bird) constituted a new record for the Tristan group. Up to four European Swallows *Hirunda rustica*, most likely also American in origin, were the only other vagrant recorded. An American Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* was apparently heard on Tristan da Cunha after Christmas and a mysterious "small, fast, bright blue bird" which frequented the flax for a while before our arrival on Tristan was not, unfortunately, seen by us.

BANDING ACTIVITIES

The use of uniquely numbered metal bands for marking birds is a widely used and valuable research tool, relying on the recapture or discovery of banded birds to determine site fidelity, longevity and movement. Mist- and hand-nets were used to catch the passerines and rail, and seabirds were caught at the nest in the case of Yellownosed Albatrosses, or extracted from their burrows in the case of Great Shearwaters. Birds coming to the lights at night were banded in small numbers and Subantarctic Skuas were procured by a number of sometimes ingenious methods ranging from aerial nooses to simply walking up to the birds and catching them. The banding of over 3 000 birds on Inaccessible Island (Table 1) almost doubled the number of birds that had previously been ringed in the Tristan da Cunha group. Wilkin's Bunting and the Inaccessible Island Flightless Rail were banded for the first time. All these birds will hopefully result in the accumulation of data over the years either of birds found back breeding on Inaccessible Island or wintering away from the island (the chances of a rail being found elsewhere are, at best, nil!). Banding was done concurrently with counting in the cases of Great Shearwaters and Yellownosed Albatrosses. Not only does this mean that a marked population is established for future study but it safeguards against double counting. The young of both these species were banded in numbers so a nucleus of known-age birds now exists.

In addition, 51 Yellownosed Albatrosses, two Sooty Albatrosses and one Tristan Thrush were ringed on Tristan da Cunha and a single Leach's Stormpetrel was ringed at sea on the return journey to Cape Town.

M.W. Fraser, c/o Denstone Inaccessible Expedition, Denstone College, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 5HN, England.

TABLE 1

BIRDS BANDED ON INACCESSIBLE ISLAND, SUMMER 1982/1983

Species	Chicks	Adults	Total
Yellownosed Albatross	573	1 120	1 693
Sooty Albatross	18	16	34
Softplumaged Petrel	-	18	18
Whitechinned Petrel	-	5	5
Subantarctic Skua	19	17	36
Great Shearwater	109	980	1 089
Antarctic Tern	2	-	2
Common Noddy	1	-	1
Kerguelen Petrel	-	1	1
Broadbilled Prion	-	1	1
Whitebellied Stormpetrel	-	15	15
Inaccessible Island Flightless Rail	-	15	15
Whiterumped Sandpiper	-	1	1
Tristan Bunting	1	44	45
Wilkin's Bunting	-	10	10
Tristan Thrush	1	107	108
Total	724	2 350	3 074

APPENDIX 1

BIRD CHECKLIST FOR INACCESSIBLE ISLAND, SUMMER 1982/1983

Rockhopper Penguin	Whitebellied Stormpetrel
Wandering Albatross	Whitefaced Stormpetrel
Blackbrowed Albatross	Common Divingpetrel
Yellownosed Albatross	Subantarctic Skua
Sooty Albatross	Kelp Gull
giant petrel	Antarctic Tern
Pintado Petrel	Arctic Tern
Broadbilled Prion	Common Noddy
Kerguelen Petrel	Inaccessible Island Flightless Rail
Softplumaged Petrel	Whiterumped Sandpiper
Whitechinned Petrel	European Swallow
Grey Petrel	Tristan Bunting
Great Shearwater	Wilkin's Bunting
Little Shearwater	Tristan Thrush
Wilson's Stormpetrel	

Birds seen offshore are included

APPENDIX 2

BIRD CHECKLIST FOR TRISTAN DA CUNHA
(22 December 1982 - 22 January 1983 and 10-18 February 1983)

Rockhopper Penguin	Whitebellied Stormpetrel
Wandering Albatross	Whitefaced Stormpetrel
Blackbrowed Albatross	Common Divingpetrel
Yellownosed Albatross	Subantarctic Skua
Sooty Albatross	Antarctic Tern
giant petrel	Common Noddy
Broadbilled Prion	Tristan Thrush
Whitechinned Petrel	Gough Moorhen
Great Shearwater	

Birds seen offshore are included

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION : COLOUR-RINGED GULLS

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* chicks have been ringed at colonies in Algoa Bay, eastern Cape, South Africa, for several years. Each chick was ringed with a metal band on the right tarsus and a locality-specific colour ring on the left tarsus. These gulls, some in juvenile plumage and others in adult plumage, have been seen at points as far away as Durban, Natal and Storms River mouth.

Greyheaded Gull *L. cirrocephalus* chicks were ringed at a colony near Port Elizabeth in 1982 in the same manner as Kelp Gulls.

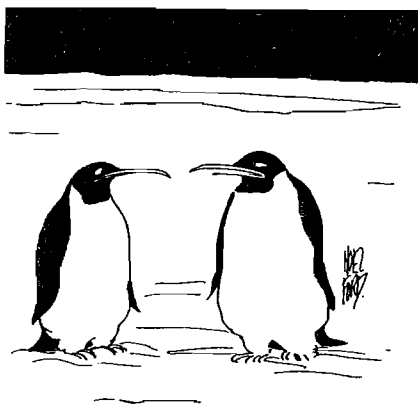
Notes on sightings of these gulls are requested from readers. The colour of the ring as well as locality and date of sightings are most important. Additional information on plumage, flock size and behaviour are also required.

Observations should be sent to : R.M. Randall, Department of Zoology, University of Port Elizabeth, P.O. Box 1600, Port Elizabeth 6000, South Africa.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION : COLOUR-RINGED SWIFT TERNS

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii* chicks have been ringed on islands in the southwestern Cape since 1977. After breeding, adults along with young birds, spread out along the coastline at least as far east as Richard's Bay, Natal, and up the west coast to at least Walvis Bay. Red colour rings were used in 1979, yellow in 1980, blue in 1981 and white in 1982. This year green has been used when members of the African Seabird Group ringed 2 249 chicks at Vondeling and Marcus Islands in April and May. To date, 9 413 chicks have been ringed. Sightings of these colour-ringed birds along with flock size and numbers of juveniles (heavily barred individuals) present are requested. The data and locality are also needed.

Send all observations to : J. Cooper, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa.



"There's no point in fooling ourselves—we could be colour-blind."

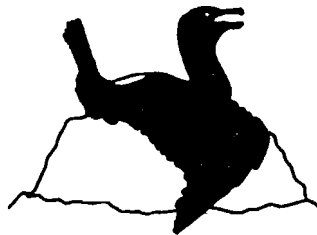
THE AMSTERDAM ALBATROSS

The marine ornithological news of the year, decade or perhaps even the century is the discovery of a new species of seabird. Not by taxonomic splitting and not of a cryptic burrowing petrel either, but a species as big as a Wandering Albatross. The Amsterdam Albatross *Diomedea amsterdamensis* from Amsterdam Island in the southern Indian Ocean is now perhaps the world's rarest seabird. Only eight nests were found in 1981 and the total population is estimated to be only 30-50 individuals. It is pleasing to note (Roux *et al.* 1983) that the species has been formally described from the partial remains of a bird found dead and not by collecting a live specimen. The twitch of the year will be for Southern Ocean seabirders to spot an Amsterdam Albatross at sea away from Amsterdam Island. The editor of *The Cormorant* offers as a prize for this achievement a drawing specially commissioned from Peter Harrison. Peter's sketch shows his idea of the salient feature for recognizing the Amsterdam Albatross at sea when compared with a young Wandering Albatross: the presence of a black mark along the leading edge of the underwing near the body.

Go for it!

REFERENCE

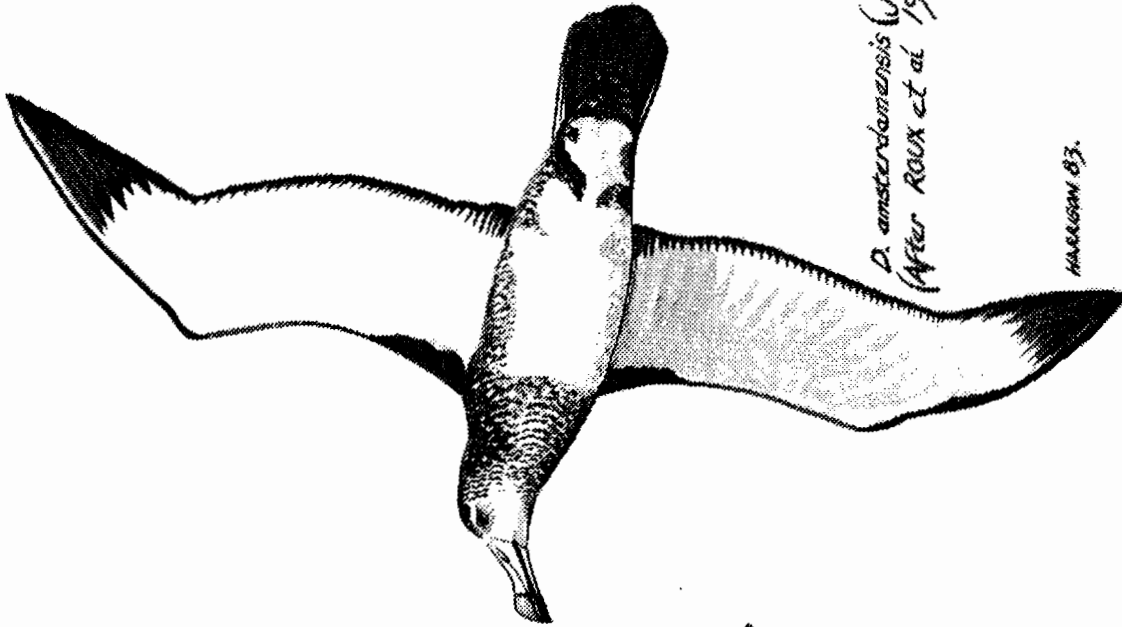
ROUX, J.-P., JOUVENTIN, P., MOUGIN, J.-L., STAHL, J.-C. & WEIMERSKIRCH, H. 1983. Un nouvel albatros *Diomedea amsterdamensis* n. sp. découvert sur l'île Amsterdam (37° 50'S, 77° 35'E). *Oiseau* 53: 1-11.



AFRICAN SEABIRD GROUP T-SHIRTS

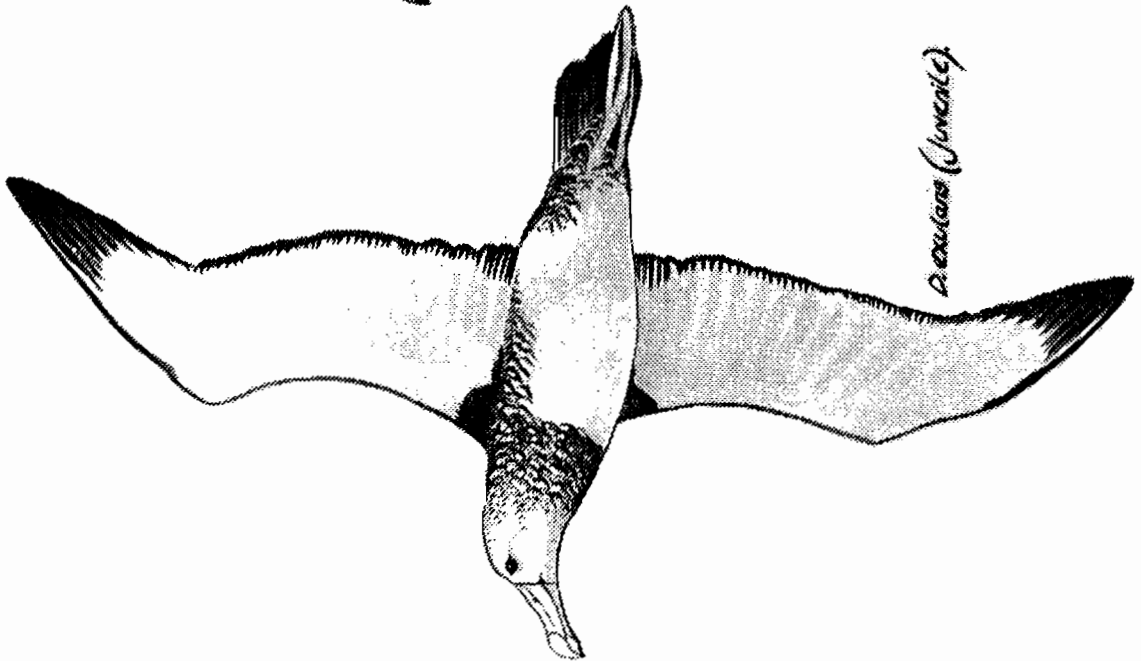
Good quality T-shirts bearing the official ASG logo and motto "Real birds eat fish" are available from the Editor at South African Rand 6,00 each. Overseas orders please include R1,00 for packing and postage.

Five colours (red, beige, pale blue, yellow and white) and four sizes (extra large, large, medium and small) are available. State your requirements with your order which should include payment by cheque made out to the "African Seabird Group".



D. amsterdamensis (Juvenile)
(After RAUX et al 1983).

HARRISON 83.



D. exulans (Juvenile)

A REVIEW OF PETER HARRISON'S SEABIRDS - AN
IDENTIFICATION GUIDE. BECKENHAM:
CROOM HELM. 448 pp.

As a seawatcher brought up on Alexander's "Birds of the Ocean" it is a pleasure to review Peter Harrison's "Seabirds - an identification guide". The amount of useful information in this book is staggering considering its size - it has been well thought out, well researched, and well presented. "Seabirds" quite frankly shows up previous 'seabird guides', mostly written or illustrated by non-marine ornithologists, to one written and illustrated by a first class birder who really has a feel and a passion for his subject matter. The combination of author and artist has given a uniformity few other sea (or land) bird guides have been able to attain.

Peter Harrison has spent eleven years producing this book - it is his first and one hopes not his last. Seabirds are not, and never will be easy to identify. However, with a little practice one can imagine a world-wide 'pelagic-push' by birders, similar to that in Europe in the late 60's and early 70's, but now all armed with binoculars, notebooks and their copies of "Seabirds".

The Introduction elucidates some of the problems inherent in seabird identification, showing how to narrow a bird down to family or genus. It also gives advice on how to record birds at sea and lists the world's seabird groups to whom records should be sent. Criteria for identification are so different to landbased observations and only by practice and notetaking can one expect to become proficient in this field. Peter Harrison states most seabirds can be identified in the right conditions - this is fair comment, but it is the criteria of identification which one must work out. Although in the species accounts there is some mention of flight variability with differing wind conditions, I feel this, combined with the effects of varying light conditions prevent many "oddjobs" from being identified. Seabird colour and flight are variables and all seabird records must take into account light, wind strength and direction, and flight - only then will a species' "field variability" be appreciated.

In the Introduction is an explanation for the inclusion of grebes (Podicipedidae) and the short treatment of seaducks (Anatidae) - this is an extremely odd decision and is my first main criticism of the book. I feel grebes should not be included apart from those on Plate 7 and possibly the Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*, and the space saved devoted to a more comprehensive account of seaducks illustrated as the rest of the book and not lumped together in the few end pages without distribution maps. Identification of seaducks in the Southern Hemisphere may not be a problem. However, there exists an ardent band of birders in the Northern Hemisphere who diligently scan scoter and eider flocks and have taken such identifications to new frontiers. I am sure some of these Northern brethren are a little disappointed - perhaps these birds do not reach the warmer climes of Cornwall?

The 88 colour plates come after the Introduction. Each has a facing caption page which gives the species number and its dimensions (where known), the main plumage features, subspecies, and a brief resumé of diagnostic characters as well as the map number and the text page for each species. The plates themselves are well laid out although I feel a few are slightly crowded (e.g. the terns on Plate 75). Certain plates are better than others, the less effective ones tending to show an untrue "jizz" (e.g. Plates 26, 30, 32). However, most of the albatrosses (*Diomedea* spp.), the *Pterodroma* petrels, the skuas (Stercorariidae), and the gulls and terns (Laridae) are of an exceptionally high quality showing very lifelike birds. Perhaps the immature Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* is too dark, the Atlantic Softplumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* is not accurate, the cap on the Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea* not strong enough (although this is light dependent) and the Bonxie's wings *Catharacta skua* are too broad, but these are minor points. It is pleasing to note that practically every bird illustrated is depicted naturally and the author has cleverly combined his gulls and terns to show birds in flight and at rest. The art work presentation alone puts "Seabirds" in the forefront of seabird identification.

The systematic section forms the main text of over two hundred pages. This deals with the three hundred and twelve species included with a concise introduction to each family and each genus. Taxonomically Peter Harrison has followed Peters, also Howard and Moore, with a treatment anticipating further taxonomic revision. However, no book can be classed as definitive and already the A.O.U. has split Yellowfooted Gull *Larus livens* from Western Gull *L. occidentalis*, and Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* from Little Tern *S. albifrons*. Also the French have described a new albatross from Amsterdam Island : *Diomedea amsterdamensis*, and Bill Bourne has at last pleaded for a specific revision of the Softplumaged Petrel (as well as for their conservation).

Each species is treated under an introduction, followed by sections on plumage description; flight, habits and jizz; distribution and movements; and finally similar species. Some of these accounts are exceptionally good, especially the giant albatrosses (*Diomedea exulans* and *D. epomophora*); the prions (*Pachyptila* spp.); the frigatebirds (Fregatidae) and the skuas - these contain concise identification information combined with helpful black and white drawings. Several points emerge from the text. I agree that a small number of *Phoebetria* albatrosses are indistinguishable at sea. I am also pleased to see distinctions drawn between birds in fresh and old plumage e.g. Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica* and Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. Also Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* in the North Atlantic (as well as the South Atlantic) can show incredible abrasion and the largest breeding grounds have been omitted (Salvages). While albino Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* are illustrated and mentioned, only brief reference is given to albinism in Procellariiformes (notably Whitechinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* and Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*). While this is a rare phenomenon in true seabirds it does occur in species other than those mentioned. While the fast wing flicking action of Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris* draws comment there is no mention of Softplumaged Petrel doing this.

Another point is the names of some species. I can understand Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* becoming Horned Grebe, Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* becoming Red Phalarope, and Frigate Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* becoming Whitefaced Storm Petrel (both names given in each case); however, I fail to see why Cape Petrel *Daption capense* suddenly takes preference over Cape Pigeon or Pintado Petrel. Also a few spelling mistakes have crept in - Phalropes, Mombassa, Balleartic, Dalmation.

The text omits mentioning spring records of Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* around Britain, Madeiran Stormpetrel *Oceanodroma castro* breeding on the Salvages and Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* breeding in Ireland.

My second main criticism is in the distributional section and I will consider this with the distributional maps (section 4). It is obviously very difficult to map a pelagic species' range at sea. The Atlantic Petrel has reliably been recorded quite far into the Indian Ocean and the Whiteheaded Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii* is more numerous in the South Atlantic than suggested; additionally, the distributional maps of certain species around the South African coast are slightly misleading. The chief inconsistency is the presence of asterisks to show out-of-range occurrences. The author admits he has been selective in this; however, if one is going to show such occurrences, it should be done with some consistency. Seabirds occasionally get very lost and turn up in very strange places - some occurrences are completely "illogical", but they are factual, and one should at least be aware of such vagrancy. I note about twenty reliable records of such vagrants which have been omitted (mainly petrels, gulls and terns), not only from Britain.

The book ends with a fairly comprehensive world wide bibliography on seabirds followed by an index of English and then scientific names. The cover maps show main seabird islands around the globe. However, one or two of these are not quite where they should be.

Peter Harrison has carefully produced by far the most authoritative seabird identification guide ever published. Anyone who is remotely interested in seabirds will find it invaluable; it contains a wealth of information and I cannot recommend it too highly. We may at present know comparatively little about seabird identification. However, we now have an excellent guide to try to work with. Seawatchers - buy it, you'll need it!

Received 24 October 1983.

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