

Notes on Sea Birds between Sydney and England

By A. S. L. E. SOUEF, C.M.Z.S., Zoological Gardens, Sydney.

During a voyage from Australia to London I took daily notes on the birds seen in the hopes of further supplementing the work already done in this direction by Captain MacGillivray, Dr. Ferguson and Mr. Alexander.

I took a record of the temperature day by day, and find that has something to do with the range of the Wandering Albatross. Between Sydney and latitude 20 south, off the west coast of Africa, the temperature ranged from 50 to 65 degrees, and Albatrosses were seen every day. We approached the equator with a strong, cool, southerly wind, which kept going until we reached latitude 21 deg. 38 min. south, when it fell, and the temperature rose to 70 deg. between 4 and 5 p.m. and between 20 and 30 Wandering Albatrosses left the ship, apparently going south again.

This was confirmed by Captain Crawford, of the ss. *Makura*, who states that he had seen the Wandering Albatrosses as far north as the island of Hopai, in the Friendly Group, which were in much the same latitude as Cardwell, Queensland; this was during a strong southerly gale.

An interesting observation was that on the second day out from Sydney, when in the vicinity of Cape Howe, I noted several Cape Petrels (*Daption capensis*). Their dappled coloration, the conspicuous white mark on the wing and peculiar butterfly-like flight make them unmistakable.

When 1400 miles from Durban and 700 miles south of Madagascar, a Curlew-Sandpiper came on board, and stayed for two days. I took a description of the bird, and it was kindly identified for me by Mr. T. Wells, of the South Kensington Museum, London, as *Erolia ferruginea*, the Curlew-Sandpiper.

When in latitude 21 deg. 38 min., south longitude 6 deg. 12 min. east, and 500 miles from Madagascar, a small Tern (*Sterna longipennis*) was flying round the ship.

Several land birds were blown off land and came aboard off Cape Finisterre, Spain, including two Thrushes, and some Stonechats. Some of these stayed on the ship until we reached London.

These observations cover the latter half of September, and the first part of October.

Owing to the difficulty of recognising Petrels (*Puffinus*) on the wing, I have not attempted to differentiate them. From the time of leaving Sydney, September 14th, to leaving Albany, they were in sight, sometimes in enormous numbers, more especially in

rough weather. Twice in the vicinity of Albany I saw a "large Black Petrel with white line under primaries and fluttering flight." This bird approached the ship from afar, flying high, and after circling round went off again. It was a stoutly built bird with nothing like the graceful movements of the Shearwaters.

Several times a bird with a soft grey back and white breast was noted in the Bight.

Spectacled Petrels (*Procellaria conspicillata*), with white chin and sometimes white face, were numerous from Durban to about 20 degrees south in the Atlantic. Their actions were much the same as those of the Shearwaters, but, unlike these, they followed the ship.

The pretty little Cape Petrel (*Daption capensis*) was noticed on many occasions between Cape Howe and Durban. They were never numerous. They often followed the ship for a day, and had a flight distinctive from that of any other sea bird.

Prions were noted on several occasions between Melbourne and Albany. Once during a storm, thousands of them were flying slowly round and round the ship.

Surely the Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) is the most numerous sea bird. They were our constant attendants from Sydney to latitude 21 deg. south in the Atlantic. The difference between the birds in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic was most marked. In the Indian Ocean large birds were often noted with wings white with the exception of the primaries, but off the west coast of Africa all birds, and there were often dozens round the ship, had the wings brown with the exception of the olecranal mark, and they certainly seemed to be smaller. Between Auckland and Sydney in February only a few birds were noted, and they had the wings light up to the olecranal mark. Comparing their pace with that of the ship, I judged that they flew at about 30 to 40 miles an hour.

After the Wanderer, the Black-browed (*Diomedea melanophrys*) was the most numerous Albatross. They were seen from Sydney to two days out from Albany, and then not noted again until after leaving Durban. This species flies proportionately slower than *D. exulans*. In overtaking the ship they kept up with the larger bird, but took a more direct course.

The White-capped Albatross (*Diomedea cauta*) was identified once, the day after leaving Melbourne.

Grey-headed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses (*Diomedea chrysostoma* and *D. chlorhynchus*) were more or less in constant attendance from Sydney till within a thousand miles from Durban (longitude 75 deg., latitude 30). Only one Yellow-nosed Albatross was seen after this, between Durban and Capetown.

Sooty Albatrosses (*Phaebetria fusca*) were noted sparingly from the Australian Bight to within three days' sail of Durban. Only one light form was noted, and that on October 1st, two days out from Albany.

Between San Francisco and Honolulu many *Diomedea immutabilis* and one *D. nigripes* were seen. These birds were smaller, rather more active, and with a more irregular flight than any of our species.

What I took to be the White Tern (*Gygis alba*) was often seen between Fiji and Auckland. I have a note, "Most beautiful bird, with a very irregular flight, continually checking and changing direction, sometimes 100 feet up or just over the water; wing beats about 120 to the minute."
