

The Vicissitudes of a Noddy : A Christmas Story

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Many years ago a beautiful little bird was described by Gould with the name *Anous cinereus*; as locality he gave "Northern Coasts of Australia," a sure indication that he was unaware of the exact place whence the bird had been secured. He later explained: "This little species is a native of the seas bordering the eastern and north-eastern coasts of Australia, and is said to breed on Norfolk Island." This last statement is quite correct, and the same species also lives on Lord Howe Island, and at the Kermadec Islands, where I first made acquaintance with it in life.

Dr. Ramsay, in his Tabular List, marked it as from "Port Darwin and Port Essington" (as far as is known now, quite incorrectly), and "N.S.W." (another locality hitherto unsupported by facts). As a consequence, it was included in Mathews's *Handlist of the Birds of Australia* (1908), and was figured in his *Birds of Australia*, where the history of this and the allied species is detailed. As years passed by, however, no definite record could be traced, and neither in Mathews's *Checklist* nor in Mathews and Iredale's *Name List* (1920) was it included. The omission was regarded as justified by the compilers of the second edition of *The Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia* (1926), and the bird was finally dismissed, as there was no proved occurrence on the Australian mainland. In accordance with an expressed policy of including birds that had been reported, and that really might occur, the species was, however, included in Mathews and Iredale's *Manual of the Birds of Australia*, Vol. I. (1921), with the statement, "Probably as a straggler to east coast of Australia." As an aid to identification, the bird was figured, also the head and leg, and a good description of the genus and species was included.

To-day (December 24, 1928), as I walked along the Manly beach, a little north of Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, looking for cast-up Petrels (two long-tailed Shearwaters were noted), I found a fresh specimen of this little friend, and, as it will be preserved in the Australian Museum, the bird can now be legitimately reinstated in all our lists. The nomination to be used would read:—

GENUS PROCELSTERNA.

Procelsterna, Lafresnaye, Mag. de. Zool., 1842, pl. 29; type, by monotypy, *Sterna tereticollis* Lafresnaye.

Procelsterna, Mathews and Iredale, Manual Birds Austr., Vol. I., p. 103, 1921 (genus defined and figured).

PROCELSTERNA ALBIVITTA BONAPARTE,
GREY NODDY.

Procelsterna albivitta, Bonaparte, Comptes Rendus Acad. Sci., Paris, Vol. XLII., p. 773, May, 1856.

New name for *Anous cinereus*, Gould (not Haldeman).

Anous cinereus, Gould, Proc. Zool. Soc. (Lond.), 1845, p. 104, Feb., 1846; northern coasts of Australia (?error= Lord Howe Island).

Anous cinereus, Gould, Birds Austr., Vol. VII., pl. 37, (pt. xxxv.), Dec. 1st, 1848. (Bird figured.)

Procelsterna cerulea cinerea, Mathews, Birds of Austr., Vol. II., p. 426, pl. 118, (*P. cinerea*), 1912: Kermadecs (bird figured).

Procelsterna cerulea, Mathews and Iredale, Manual Birds Austr., Vol. I., p. 103, pl. 3, fig. 7 (bird figured), pl. xiii., fig. 8, 9 (head, leg), 1921; good description and figures.

I have separated the Grey Noddies into two or more species, as the pale upper coloration of this species, with the whitish lower coloration, contrasts so strongly with the darker uniform coloration of the smaller group, the true *P. cerulea* and its forms. The erratic distribution of the group also confirms this arrangement, while it is noteworthy that this curious little generic group is confined to the Pacific Ocean extending to the Sandwich Islands and from near the coast of South America to the present record, which is its most western limit. When Mathews prepared the article in the *Birds of Australia*, where all the allies are discussed, the name *cinerea* of Gould was preferred, as it was not known to be preoccupied, but more recently a prior usage by Haldemann was recognised (Austral Avian Record, Vol. IV., pp. 135-149, 1921), and the acceptance of Bonaparte's emendation became necessary.

The references cited will cover the whole natural history of this delightful little re-addition to the Australian Avifauna—a pleasing Christmas gift.

P.S.—A remarkable coincidence has happened that after five years intensive searching two rare birds should be found in the space of a few weeks: thus on February 10, 1929, on the same beach I picked up a fresh specimen of the Lord Howe Island Petrel, *Pterodroma melanopus* Gmelin, a bird with a history, full details of which will be given in the *Australian Zoologist* now in the press.