

they build their bowers on his property he has not yet observed them nesting, but every year they return about Christmas time with their young ones.

The late G. H. Morton, of Benjeroop, reported the finding of a nest of the Spotted Bower-bird in a prickly needle-bush about 1897. Since then the country on the Victorian side of the river from Swan Hill to Kerang has not undergone such a great deal of change, but even so I am inclined to think that if the Bower-bird does exist there it must be a much rarer bird than it is on the western side of Swan Hill. I have made two trips to Benjeroop in search of the Bower-bird, but I have not been able to find any trace of it, nor have the local residents been able to assist me. After having given the matter careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that, because of their reduced numbers in settled districts, the damage that could be caused by Spotted Bower-birds—in Victoria, at least—is negligible and that it would not be inflicting hardship on anyone to have them placed on the protected list before it is too late.

The White-breasted Petrel of Southern Australia

By FREDERIC WOOD JONES, Manchester, England

Dr. Serventy's article on this interesting bird (*Emu*, vol. XXXIX, part 2, p. 95) recalled to me the visits I had made to Kangaroo Island with the late Dr. A. M. Morgan and his speculations as to the identity of the bird and the whereabouts of its breeding headquarters. It also reminded me of that "visit" to The Pages, which, eagerly looked forward to by both of us, was never accomplished: for Dr. Morgan always had a fancy that The Pages might prove to be its breeding island. Later on, when travelling by sea between Melbourne and Adelaide, it became an expectation (rarely lacking in fulfilment) that, in the neighbourhood of Backstairs Passage, some of these birds would be certain to pass alongside near enough for identification. On December 2, 1936, as the members of the McCoy Society were approaching the Passage in the T.S.M.V. *Duntroon*, several members of the party had these birds under observation as they passed close to the ship in the late afternoon. I have seen them from the decks of the old South Australian lighthouse tender *Conqueror* and later from the Federal ship *Cape York* when working near those waters. I fancy there is no month in which the birds are altogether absent from the waters around the eastern end of Kangaroo Island. To the fishermen of Portland and

Port Fairy in Victoria they are well known, and from Portland I have received two wave-cast specimens so decomposed as to be fit only for the preparation of skeletons. On September 19, 1936, however, I received a batch of five birds from Portland: three were too far gone to skin and were therefore preserved in alcohol, and two, a male and a female, were good enough to be made into skins. The description of these birds, in the flesh, is as follows:

Upper parts uniform brownish-black with distinct bluish reflections. Brown of dorsal surface extending on the head to the level of the gape. The eye is entirely surrounded by the brown dorsal coloration, with the exception of a small crescentic white area immediately below the lower eyelid. The dark coloration extends variably on to the throat: in some specimens the entire girth of the neck is flecked by grey-brown feathers. Some of the feathers of the lower part of back and tail-coverts edged with narrow margin of white. Axillaries dusky, dark-quilled, paler at the margin. Under parts entirely white with exception of variable flecking of the neck. Soft parts: bill dusky, darker at the tip; tarsus on inner side, whole of inner toe and inner side of middle toe, pale flesh colour tinged with light lilac; outer side of tarsus, outer toe and outer side of middle toe dark brown; webs pale flesh colour, darker at sides and free margin.

Now after a lapse of three years, the bluish reflection on the dorsal plumage has practically disappeared.

The measurements, in millimetres, of these specimens, taken in the flesh, are as follow:

	Sex	Wing	Culmen	Tail	Tarsus
Skin	♂	186	35	59	43
Skin	♀	176	32	57	42
Spirit Specimen	—	207	34	58	42
Spirit Specimen	—	195	34	60	41
Spirit Specimen	—	205	35	59	38

Compared with Serventy's Kangaroo Island specimens these Portland birds are small and short-tailed, and are nearest in measurements to the series from New South Wales. With this, as with so many of our Australian *Tubinares*, it appears impossible to proceed much further in taxonomy until the breeding islands have been discovered. There is a great deal of ornithological exploration still needed of the many islands yet unvisited by ornithologists prepared to make some prolonged stay ashore.

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