

fluttering of the wings and then an effortless glide, which resembles that of the two members of the genus *Hylochelidon* more than the Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), to which structurally it is more closely allied.

One can be fully assured that wherever their future colonization instincts lead them, they will be gladly welcomed, both as a source of general usefulness and an attraction to the locality.

Probable Occurrence of the Southern Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) in Australia

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I think it might be said that it is generally regarded that gulls do not wander far from land, and in that respect they differ from most other sea birds. In recent years, however, the Common Kittywake (*Rissa tridactyla*) has been recorded following ships across the Northern Atlantic, often in large flocks, during the winter and spring months; likewise, the Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) has been noticed following ships from San Francisco to the Hawaiian Islands.

In Australia two species of gulls are common; the Silver Gull (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) and the Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*). The latter species is largely confined to the southern parts of Australia. New Zealand has three species of gulls, the Silver Gull (usually called the Red-billed) and two others, neither of which has yet been recorded in Australian waters.

Occurrences outside the normal distribution of the various species are unlikely and therefore must be considered as accidental. Consequently, it is with interest that I record the probable occurrence of the Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) on the coastline of New South Wales. On two occasions, within the space of three weeks, a single specimen was observed on the foreshores of Botany Bay, near the entrance of Cook's River, a little to the south of Sydney. It was associated with the large flocks of Silver Gulls that habitually gather there. On the first occasion (January 31, 1943) I was in company with Mr. J. A. Keast. We concluded that the bird seen was the Pacific Gull. Three weeks later (February 20) Mr. K. A. Hindwood and I were again in the locality and we saw what we assumed was the same bird. Realizing that the earlier record was not certain, as Mr. Tom Iredale had pointed out that the Pacific Gull was the only gull with a black sub-terminal tail-bar and could be immediately recognized and identified by such

character, and by its deep heavy bill, a careful description, with the aid of a telescope, was taken. It reads as follows: "Back, black; wings, black; wing-coverts, edged with white; legs and feet, dirty yellow (yellow ochre); webs, dirty yellow; claws, blackish; upper mandible, chrome yellow; lower bill, chrome yellow, with a patch of orange-red near the tip; tail, pure white without a black sub-terminal tail-bar." The bird was only a short distance away resting on the sand. Later it was purposely disturbed and watched in leisurely flight.

Specimens of several gulls were obtained from the Australian Museum and an examination of these indicated that the bird was the Southern Black-backed Gull.

The late A. J. North in his *Nests and Eggs of Birds found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania* (vol. IV, part 4, June, 1914, page 353) states, in reference to the plumage of the Pacific Gull, "... tail feathers white, crossed with a sub-terminal band of brownish-black . . . and in others entirely absent." Evidently North erred in this latter remark for all other recognized authorities emphasize the tail bar. Mr. Hindwood searched through the specimens in the Australian Museum collection and found two mounted birds in the public gallery, (nos. 3734, 3735) which were labelled 'Pacific Gull' but which were definitely the English Greater Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*). One is a fully-adult bird, the other is immature, about two or three years old. It seems likely that North based his incorrect remarks on these wrongly-identified birds.

It is difficult to advance any reason for the appearance of the bird seen at Botany Bay. During the 1914-18 war gulls were reported to have followed the rather slow-moving convoys across the Atlantic and it is possible that the New Zealand bird may have followed a ship, or ships, across the Tasman. The bird has not been seen since February 20.

It may be mentioned that the two mounted specimens of the Greater Black-backed Gull have been in the Australian Museum gallery for at least 68 years. They were listed in 'Palmer's' register in which all specimens then in the Museum were first recorded. Many of the specimens date, of course, from a much earlier period than when the register was introduced, i.e. *circa* 1875. The data given in the register is '*Larus pacificus*, Australian seas.'

On the principle that 'a bird in the hand is worth two on the sand' some doubts may arise in the minds of scientific workers as to the precise identification of the bird seen. However, both Mr. Hindwood and I are convinced that it was the Southern Black-backed Gull.

A member has volumes 1 and 2 of the Journal of the South African Ornithologists Union for sale. Apply to the Hon. General Secretary for particulars.