

Observations on Migration in the Timor Sea in 1949

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Whilst I was on cruises in the F.R.V. *Warreen* and *Stanley Fowler* in the Timor Sea during July, August and October, 1949, a few observations on the migration of landbirds were made, which might be placed on record.

Threskiornis aethiopica. White Ibis.

On July 16, when in the vicinity of Thursday Island, Torres Strait, at a point $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles SW of Goods Island, we saw a flock of about one hundred White Ibis flying to the NNE in v-formation.

Merops ornatus. Rainbow-bird.

A single bird was seen, and heard calling, on West Island, in the Ashmore Reef, on October 6, and a recently-dead bird found at the foot of the light tower on Browse Island on October 11. It had probably been dead only a few days.

Halcyon sanctus. Sacred Kingfisher.

On October 6 I saw one bird, with buff under parts, in one of the taller shrubs on West Island. On October 11 there were two similar birds on Browse Island, one perched on a bush and the other on an old rail stuck in the ground. On October 20 one bird was flushed from the *Spinifex longifolius* clumps on Bedout Island, off Port Hedland.

These lone individuals were undoubtedly southwards bound migrants staging their way across from Timor to Western Australia. The small sand cays on which they were seen could not possibly support a resident population.

P. P. King records (*Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia*, 1827, vol. 2, p. 416), procuring a bird at sea in the neighbourhood of Cambridge Gulf. J. E. Gray, who wrote the appendix on the birds collected by this expedition, commented that the bird had probably been blown off shore by a strong land wind. It was more probably a bird on migration. The date of collection is not stated, but King was in the locality on the following dates—1818, between March 16 and 23; 1819, September 15 to 29; 1820, September 3; 1821, mid-July.

Apus pacificus. Fork-tailed Swift.

Swifts of this species were sighted on several occasions in the Timor Sea.

They were first met with on October 2, at 7.30 a.m., when we were in lat. $14^{\circ} 12' S.$, long. $122^{\circ} 8' E.$, 12 miles SE of the East Hook of Scott Reef. The bosun (N. E. Stewart) reported half a dozen Swifts flying mast-high, about 40 feet, towards the south-east.

On October 3, at 5.45 p.m., when we were anchored off Seringapatam Reef, about six Swifts were seen flying purposefully towards the south-east at a height of about 200 feet.

On October 5, at 5.30 a.m., when about 40 miles SW of Ashmore Reef, the second engineer (C. Bridges) reported four Swifts flying to the eastward at about 500 feet.

On October 6, at 6.45 p.m., after dark, while we were at anchor off East Island, Ashmore Reef, we heard a bird hit the rigging. It recovered and flew around the ship and again alighted. I found it on the deck of the flying bridge. It was a Fork-tailed Swift, with a wing span of 424 mm. The bird appeared exhausted and we placed it on the roof of the chart cabinet, but later it had gone.

On October 7, at 7.30 a.m., when close to and in sight of Hibernia Reef, I saw one Swift flying to the south-east at a height of 50 feet. At 8.40 a.m. another was flying around the ship at 30 to 40 feet.