

A Second Australian Record of the Arctic Tern

By D. G. MORGAN, Parkville, Vic.

While conducting research on bird populations for the McCoy Society for Field Investigation and Research, at Lake Purrumbete, near Camperdown, Victoria, on December 18, 1953, I came upon the body of a tern near the top of a hill overlooking the lake. The bird had been dead for several days and was lying in the grass of the ridge which surrounds the lake on its east and north sides. The place where the bird was found was 200 to 300 feet above the level of the lake, a little below the summit of the ridge.

On the Wednesday of the preceding week, a violent south-westerly wind had spread rapidly across Victoria from the west. The wind persisted between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., gusts reaching 52 m.p.h. From the position in which the bird was found, it appeared that the bird had been blown inland by the wind from the coast (30 miles away to the south-west). There are no hills of note between the coast and Lake Purrumbete: the first hill a bird blown inshore would encounter is the hill around the north-east side of the lake. South-westerly winds rush over this with a very high velocity, possibly up to 70 m.p.h. The bird was found just below the summit of this hill. This evidence suggests that the bird was blown inland by the south-westerly gale, became exhausted, and was finally dashed against the hill where it died.

The specimen was taken to the National Museum, Melbourne. It proved to be an Arctic Tern (*Sterna macrura* = *paradisaea*) in non-breeding plumage. The description of the specimen is as follows. Tail long and pronouncedly forked (like that of a swallow). The outermost rectrices are prolonged, with the outer web dark grey, almost black. The next pair of rectrices were similar, but considerably shorter, with a paler outer web. The upper side of the tail was shaded grey. Upper tail coverts, white. Back and wing coverts, grey. Remiges typical of the species. Forehead and fore part of the crown white, some feathers of the fore part with black tips. Remainder of crown, and nape, black. Underparts white. Bill black, showing a red gape. Feet and legs, dark red. Tarsus, 15.5 mm. National Museum specimen no. B4756 (skeleton).

This is only the second record of the Arctic Tern from Australia, though it occurs regularly at Heard and Macquarie Islands (see M. C. Downes, 1952, 'Arctic Terns in the Subantarctic', *Emu*, 52, 306-310). The only other Australian specimen was a bird washed up on the beach at Bunbury, Western Australia, in 1927 (see W. B. Hitchcock, 1952, 'An Australian Specimen of the Arctic Tern',

Emu, 52, 68-69). It may be that this species occurs regularly in Australian waters during the Australian summer, but has been overlooked.

Notes on Three Tasmanian Birds

By K. B. HINSBY, Hobart, Tas.

A nest of the Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) was found under construction on December 17, 1949. It was situated in the branch of an *Olearia argyophylla* tree spreading over a small stream, which seemed promising for photography. The next visit was not until February 4, when I expected the young would have left, but I found the nest abandoned, apparently because of rainy weather. A further nest was found, however, fifty yards distant, in a *Rubus fruticosus* four feet over the water, and apparently built by the same pair. It contained three young. The female was sitting and her open bill was indicative of the day's high temperature. Both parents appeared to be in moult, because of the lateness of the season. This condition was also noticeable with a Fan-tailed Cuckoo and a male Blue Wren in the same locality.

The nests were built of fibrous eucalyptus bark and cobwebs, being thickly coated with webbing around the widest circumference. The lining was of fine bark, dry grass and moss in the first nest, but in the latter it consisted mainly of cow hair. Cattle browsing by the creek had left much hair on sticks and thorns, which had been readily gathered by the birds.

There has been much speculation on the use of the nest 'tail'. It appears to me that it is meant to give additional strength. Any strain on the nest is taken below as well as above the limb, as indicated by pressure with a finger inside and the thumb outside the nest. Apparently the tensile strength of the combined cobwebs and fibrous material exceeds the strain the structure is likely to be subjected to during incubation. In comparing the nest of the Grey Fantail with that of the Satin Flycatcher the covering of cobwebs is noticeably circular (around the circumference), whilst with the latter it is thickly woven vertically from limb to nest-rim. The Satin Flycatcher, however, unlike the Fantail, usually builds in a high, exposed position, and the vertical binding is apparently more secure to withstand capsizing during strong wind. This factor would hardly be necessary along sheltered creek-sides.

Records state that the Satin Flycatcher (*Myiagra cyano-leuca*) usually appears in Tasmania about the end of September. However, in my father's field-book there is a note for September 14, 1890, of their arriving in numbers at