

## A Note on the Shearwaters Breeding on the Tollgates Islands, N.S.W.

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The Tollgates Islands rise abruptly from the sea at the mouth of Bateman's Bay, about two miles from the New South Wales south coast ( $150^{\circ}10'E$   $35^{\circ}45'S$ ). Although they were visited and described by Basset Hull (1912) earlier this century, there do not seem to be any recent accounts of the birds of the two islets. The present notes were collected on three visits, each of two days' duration, between November 8, 1958, and December 10, 1958. Only one day was spent on the north islet, attention being concentrated on the south islet.

At the time of the two December visits (December 5-6 and 9-10) the shearwaters were sitting on eggs in the undergrowth of the plateaux of both islands. Basset Hull records finding only the Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) breeding during his visit in September 1911, when the birds would have been cleaning out their burrows. However, on the recent visits both that shearwater and the Short-tailed (*P. tenuirostris*) were found breeding side by side on the south islet.

Although the *P. pacificus* tended to nest on the upper section of the plateau slope and the *P. tenuirostris* lower down, there was a considerable overlap zone, and both species were found nesting on the surface as well as in burrows.

The presence of breeding *P. pacificus* on the north islet was confirmed, but no extensive search was made there for *P. tenuirostris*, although it is probable that both birds breed there, too.†

The critical measurements of two specimens (one of each species) collected from the south islet, and the measurements of their own and two additional eggs, are given in the Table.

The *P. tenuirostris* specimen has been examined by Dr. D. L. Serventy, who confirms the identification.

The colony is a small one, certainly with fewer than 1000 Shearwaters nesting. It is very vulnerable to trampling, as many nests are on or close to the surface under thick vegetation, whilst the soft friable soil easily subsides under foot, destroying the burrows. It is therefore hoped that people will refrain from visiting the islets between September and April, in order to allow the colony to maintain itself.

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† The presence of breeding *P. tenuirostris* on the north islet has recently been established by K. A. Hindwood (pers. comm.).

TABLE

A Comparison of the Measurements in mm. of *P. pacificus* and *P. tenuirostris* and their Eggs

	<i>P. pacificus</i> Female	<i>P. tenuirostris</i> Male	
Right wing .. ..	298	275	
Tail .. . . . .	134	84	
Right tarsus .. .	49	49	
Bill .. . . . .	37.5	30.5	
Length		Breadth	
Eggs	58.7	38.9	
	61.9	41.7	
		Length	
		Breadth	
		72.4	
		48.2	
		69.3	
		47.8	

The breeding of *P. tenuirostris* on Tollgates Islands extends the known breeding range of the bird into New South Wales. It breeds on Gabo Island, 125 miles south of Bateman's Bay, and it would be surprising if detailed investigation of other islands between the two localities, and even north of Bateman's Bay, does not disclose other breeding colonies. The southern limit of the breeding range of *P. pacificus* is Montague Island, 35 miles south of Tollgates Islands, so that an overlap in the breeding ranges of the two shearwaters clearly occurs.

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## REFERENCE

Basset Hull, A. F. (1912), 'Avifauna of New South Wales Islands, II'. *Emu*, 11, 202-7.

**Brolgas at Corop.**—On Saturday November 22, whilst travelling by car along the Midland Highway, about two miles east of Corop, I saw two Brolgas (*Grus rubicundus*) wading through the swamp waters adjacent to a lake. The birds were on the south side of the road and about fifty yards from it. I have included this record as it is my only encounter with the species, and the species is very rare to the Goulburn Valley and surrounding districts. My wife, who has always lived in this area, can recall seeing the species once near Cobram.—G. W. BEDGGOOD, Mooroopna, Vic. 25/11/58.