

dissected a four year-old bird in December 1972 and found an oocyte of 1.6 mm and an enlarged oviduct, convoluted in the upper portion. This suggests that pre-breeders even as young as four year-olds may undergo similar cyclic changes to those undergone by mature birds.

We conclude that the birds described here from the Antarctic waters could be non-breeders or failed breeders or pre-breeders, or combinations of all of these. It may also be possible that the 1980 Antarctic birds (all with straight oviducts) were from a flock of younger individuals than the 1981 ones, and that the Antarctic flocks are segregated in age and breeding status.

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SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER ON FIGURE OF EIGHT ISLAND, ARCHIPELAGO OF THE RECHERCHE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

During a survey of breeding seabirds on islands of the Archipelago of the Recherche, my wife and I spent eight hours on Figure of Eight Island on 1 November 1981; Figure of Eight Island is at the western end of the archipelago, some 33 km south-west of Esperance.

This island is recorded as a nesting station of the Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes* (Serventy & Whittell 1948). V.N. Serventy (1952) visited the island on 7 November 1950; he reported that "Although a number of burrows showing fresh marks of diggings were searched, no birds could be found. However, the whole of the central portion of the island is a rookery". He did find Great-winged Petrels *Pterodroma macroptera* nesting there.

During the visit on 1 November 1981, the first burrow checked was found to contain a Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*.

Following this discovery, over 150 "fresh" burrows were checked ("fresh" burrows were those with a clear indication of very recent activity by the birds). Birds were found in sixteen of these; two birds were found in each of three burrows and one bird in each of the other thirteen. All nineteen birds found were Short-tailed Shearwaters. At the date of the visit, most Flesh-footed Shearwaters would have been at sea during the daytime with only a few remaining in burrows. On the other hand, Great-winged Petrels, which nest in winter, would have been expected to have large chicks present.

We checked burrows first in an area immediately behind the beach on the eastern side (part of the central area referred to by V.N. Serventy). Subsequently, checks were made in areas across the northern slopes of the southern end of the island and the north-eastern side of the central isthmus. Short-tailed Shearwaters were found in each of these areas.

For some years beach-washed Short-tailed Shearwaters have been reported from Esperance and other parts of the south coast of Western Australia. The earliest of these is probably that reported by D.L. Serventy (1947), who found the remains of one of these birds on a beach near Hopetoun in November 1946; he indicated that the finding should "occasion little surprise, as birds from the South Australian breeding islands no doubt forage widely westward over the Great Australian Bight...".

Subsequently, other beach-washed specimens were reported. Dr Serventy (1948) found three at Esperance on 23 April 1948 while Storr & Johnstone (1977) reported birds found near Esperance, near Albany and at Yallingup, which is on the western coast south of Cape Naturaliste, in 1976 and 1977. Since then, others (unpublished records) have found derelict specimens at Esperance. I also found two on the beach there in November 1981.

The report by Frith (1978) that Short-tailed Shearwaters had been captured alive near Phuket Island, western peninsula Thailand in May 1977 and the findings reported here indicate that some Short-tailed Shearwaters, probably ones that breed in south-western Australia, may migrate regularly to the northern Indian Ocean.

Although large areas of Figure of Eight Island were not checked during the visit in 1981, only Short-tailed Shearwaters were found in the burrows searched. Four weeks earlier I had banded Great-winged Petrel chicks near Albany; they were still developing feathers at the time. Even if young of this species had been present in the areas searched on Figure of Eight Island before our visit, and already departed, some evidence of their occupation would have been found. Also, only two days

earlier I had banded Flesh-footed Shearwaters in burrows during the day on nearby islands, and did likewise in the following week. Their occurrence on Figure of Eight Island was expected but none was found. However, it is probable that some of the burrows checked may have belonged to this species.

The presence of Short-tailed Shearwaters in burrows, prepared and lined, is a clear indication of breeding, though still some three weeks prior to their normal egg-laying dates. The recorded breeding range is from Broughton Island, New South Wales, to St Francis Island, Nuyts Archipelago, off Ceduna, South Australia. The present record extends this range some 1,100 km west of the previously recorded limit.

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COMMUNAL BEHAVIOUR OF BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATERS

In the most recent review of communal breeding in Australian birds, Dow (1980) lists the Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris* among those species for which this habit has been reported only once or twice. Neither he nor Rowley (1976) could find any information additional to that quoted by Harrison (1969), which refers to three Brown-headed Honeyeaters attending a young Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus* at each of two nests (recorded under RAOU Nest Record Scheme). In fact, Boehm (1957) stated that nestlings of this honeyeater in south-eastern South

Australia were fed by "helpers", and suggested that such birds were possibly the progeny of the previous year. Serventy (1958) also reported three birds feeding fledgelings on an RAOU Campout in south-western Western Australia.

Around Armidale, New South Wales, I have noted Brown-headed Honeyeaters in groups of three to eight in most months of the year, and though I have insufficient nesting data, I believe that communal breeding occurs in *brevirostris* at least as often as it does in the