

ABOUT MUTTON-BIRDS.—This season seems to be specially favourable for Mutton-Birds, as I never remember seeing them in such vast numbers, and in so many different places before. On Sunday, 28th September, on the passage from Hobart to Melbourne, I observed in the vicinity of Eddystone Point myriads of the birds about 3 or 4 miles off the land. There was a heavy N.E. swell, and large quantities of kelp on the surface of the water, which had probably been uprooted during the previous heavy gales. The birds appeared to be intently searching for food, and it is quite possible they may have found some small crustaceans, &c., among the kelp. But it was on our return trip from Melbourne, on the 2nd October, that by far the greatest numbers I have ever seen were observed. So great were the numbers that they attracted the attention of many members of the crew. For two hours, from 5.30 a.m. to 7.30 a.m., we were passing through them. The vessel at the time was steaming about 13 knots an hour, which is equal to about 15 statute miles, so that we passed through a continuous mass of them for 30 miles. Their general motion was flying round in a circular manner, but proceeding at the same time to the N.W. At times numbers of them would settle on the water so thickly as to completely blacken it, giving it the appearance of a reef of black rocks. After 8 a.m. there were none to be seen, but about 3.15 p.m., after passing through Banks Strait, we began to observe stragglers, and they gradually increased in numbers as we approached Eddystone Point. They were close above the water, appeared to be searching for food, and making their way, at the same time, towards the islands of the Furneaux Group. They were probably the returning numbers of those who had gone to the southward searching for food, while those we met in the morning had taken an almost contrary direction to their feeding grounds. The Mutton-Birds have a peculiar motion in their flight; they never appear very high above the water, and flap their wings rapidly half a dozen times or so, and then stop and balance themselves with the momentum they have acquired, again repeating the flapping movement.—(CAPT.) WILLIAM WALLER, s.s. *Westralia*, 1st November, 1902.