

Shearwaters in South-western Victoria

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Cliff. Beaglehole of this Union and of the Portland Field Naturalists Club lately turned his beach-combing attentions to Discovery Bay, that lonely 30-mile stretch of beach between Cape Bridgewater and the Glenelg River mouth. The locality is seldom visited, being backed by high drifting sand-hills, swamps and lakes. During the spring of 1957 Beaglehole gathered over twenty species of dead sea birds from this beach, including five shearwaters, namely Short-tailed (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), Fluttering (*P. gavia*), Sooty (*P. griseus*), Fleshly-footed (*P. carneipes*) and, on November 21, one Little Shearwater (*P. assimilis*). The last-named is of great interest, being the first specimen of the species recorded from Victoria and the fifth from eastern Australia. The records of the other four will be found in K. A. Hindwood, *Emu*, vol. 55, p. 185.

Beaglehole found his bird at the western end of the bay about four miles from Cape Bridgewater and, as he had a Fluttering Shearwater in hand, found earlier in the day, he had his comparison feature and was able to identify it at once. (Serventy and Whittell show the distinctions in *The Birds of Western Australia*, p. 93). The light blue colour of the legs was clearly showing when the bird was picked up.

On receipt of the bird at the National Museum, Mr. Allen McEvey wrote—

Congratulations on your good work and on collecting what is, so far as my checking of literature reveals, the fifth east Australian and the first Victorian specimen of *P. assimilis*, the Little Shearwater. . . . The following data may be of use to you. Reg. No. B7104. Beach specimen; feathered skeleton. Culmen: 23 mm., bill width 6.5 mm., tarsus: 37 mm., wing (estimated) 168-170 mm. Apart from general features appearance and measurements, characters used in determination have been the bill and the pattern of the inner margins of the primaries and of the side of neck and nape feathers.

Two other of the shearwaters found on Discovery Bay are worth more than a mention—the Sooty because it is an uncommon bird on western Victorian beaches, and the Fleshly-footed all five Victorian specimens of which have been recovered on this bay by Beaglehole.

Robertson's interesting notes (*Emu*, vol. 55, p. 185) raise the question—what are Short-tailed Shearwaters doing off the Queensland coast in December, a time when the great majority of the species is nesting in Bass Straits and vicinity? If a post-mortem be held on any further birds collected from the locality, observations should be made of sex and ovary conditions. They may be young birds which perhaps do not breed in their first year.