

A Petrel New for Australia

By J. D. GIBSON and A. R. SEFTON, Thirroul, N.S.W.

On January 2, 1956, while checking the sea-bird mortality on local beaches, we came across the remains of a large petrel which proved to be the Westland Black Petrel (*Procellaria westlandica* Falla) of New Zealand. The bird was found on Corrimal Beach which is on the New South Wales coast about 45 miles south of Sydney. Previously the weather had been fine with intermittent thunderstorms and light winds.

The remains were little more than a skeleton with some feathers still attached to the dried skin. Fortunately the skull and legs were intact and these together with a small amount of chin feathering provided sufficient diagnostic material.

The bird was found on the high tide line which was also strewn with many bodies of the Short-tailed Petrel (*Puffinus tenuirostris*). The complete skeleton was present. The skull had only a few feathers adhering to the base of the culmen and in the apex of the inter-ramal space. No tail or wing feathers were attached to the remains although two primaries were found nearby. The plumage was black tending to brownish-black on the under-surface, all the feather-bases being grey. The latericorns and ramicorns were pale coloured, the tip of the dertrum was black as was the tip of the lower mandible and also the sulcus. The only measurements obtainable were those of the bill (47 mm.) tarsus (63 mm.) and middle toe and claw (81 mm.).

A few days later the specimen was shown to Mr. K. A. Hindwood who suggested that its specific identity be confirmed by sending it to Dr. R. A. Falla, to be compared with material in the Dominion Museum, Wellington. This was done and Dr. Falla promptly replied—"You may certainly add a new bird to the Australian list, for your specimen is undoubtedly *P. westlandica*. Not only is it the first record for Australia, it is as far as I know the first record of any specimen picked up dead on a sea beach anywhere in the world." (*in litt.* to K.A.H. 25/1/56). The only other record away from the vicinity of the breeding grounds appears to be that of a bird which fell on board a ship travelling between Lyttelton and Wellington, in July 1954. (Oliver, W. R. B., *New Zealand Birds* 1955, p. 145).

The Westland Black Petrel remained undiscovered until October 1945, when a party of pupils from the Barrytown school reported to the Dominion Museum their observations on a sea bird breeding in the coastal forests of their district. Barrytown is in Westland Province on the west coast of the South Island. Subsequently Falla (*Rec. Cant. Mus.*, vol. v, no. 2, pp. 111-113) described the bird as a form of the Black Petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*) with the subspecific name,

westlandica. The Ornithological Society of New Zealand's Checklist (1953) gives the bird full specific rank, at the same time implying its affinities with *P. parkinsoni* by using the vernacular name of Westland Black Petrel, a treatment with which Falla (*in litt.*) is quite in agreement. W. R. B. Oliver, however, considers it to be a subspecies of the White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria æquinoctialis*) and treats it as such in the revised edition of his work *New Zealand Birds* (1955, p. 145).

The dimensions of the Corrimal bird approximate those given by Falla of a juvenile male from Barrytown. As the nesting season is finished by mid-December, our bird was possibly one of the inexperienced youngsters which so often are responsible for the more unusual distribution records.

Yellow and Crimson Rosellas together at Tumut.—On April 24, 1956, in a hotel yard at Tumut, New South Wales, I saw a Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) perched in a willow tree. As I watched it, I became aware of another parrot directly beneath. This second bird, although of a slightly paler, more washed-out yellow than others with which I am familiar further west on the Murray River, was an obvious Yellow Rosella (*P. flaveolus*). The two engaged in some mutual chattering, bowing, twig nibbling, etc., and then flew to another willow, whence, after similar behaviour, they flew together over the town. To all appearances they were a mated pair. During that day, between Tumut and Tooma, I saw hundreds of Crimson Rosellas, but no more Yellow Rosellas.

The relationship between *elegans* and *flaveolus* remains unsettled. In the latest review, A. J. Cain (*Ibis*, 97, pp. 458-461) discussed the almost complete lack of evidence regarding the meeting or overlapping of the ranges of the two forms in this particular region, and stressed the importance of further field work on this point. My observation, an isolated one and outside the accepted breeding season, is probably of little significance, but in view of Cain's remarks is here recorded to assist (or confuse) future workers.—J. N. HOBBS, Finley, N.S.W., 30/6/56.

Finches and Wasps.—I read with interest the article in vol. 55, part 4, of *The Emu* about the Banded or Double-bar Finches nesting close to wasps' nest. I observed the same thing near a farm-house at Booie, fifteen miles from Nango, southern Queensland, in the 1952-53 nesting season. In an old lemon tree there were about a dozen wasps' nests mainly in use. In the period mentioned three pairs of Double-bars were nesting in the tree at the same time. Two of the nest entrances were within nine inches of an inhabited wasp's nest.—M. T. TEMPLETON, Ingleburn, N.S.W., 1/6/56.