

Dickison, D. J., Flight of the Muck-duck (*Biziura lobata*), *Australian Bird Watcher*, 1: 233.

Mystic Park, Victoria.

Manuscript received June 5, 1965.

Predators of the Mutton-birds.—On Griffiths Island at Port Fairy, Victoria, thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters, *Puffinus tenuirostris*, breed each year. The worst predator is the brown rat, *Rattus norvegicus*, which abounds on the island. One night I saw two rats chase a young fluffy shearwater chick out of its burrow, and both caught it by the neck. The bird made no sound and by the time I ran to its aid it was dead. Another night I heard a loud screech and ran to see three rats biting the neck of an adult Mutton-bird. The bird snapped and clawed fiercely and then two more rats ran in and all five of them caught the bird around the neck. By the time I got there the bird was dead. I jumped on the rats and killed one but the others got away. I have found dogs roaming the flat area near the sea and pulling young birds from the burrows and eating parts of them. One night a big black dog met me on the Causeway and it was dragging a rabbit trap on one of its hind legs. I tried to help it but it snarled at me so I stepped aside and let it go on its way. Rabbits are undermining areas used by the Shearwaters and destroying much of the Mutton-bird territory. Town boys trapping for rabbits often catch Mutton-birds and I have endeavoured to encourage them to trap in the winter. Tourists tramping on the island often collapse burrows killing the young ones by the fall of earth. Two rat poisoning campaigns, supervised by the local Health Officer, have been carried out in recent times. I hope they have been successful. In spite of all these setbacks no reduction in the numbers of the Mutton-birds has been noticed.—(Miss) GRACIE BOWKER, Port Fairy, Vic.

Note: Miss Bowker has made a special study of the Mutton-birds and has banded many thousands of them under the C.S.I.R.O. Australian Bird Banding Scheme—ED.

Swifts and Bushfires.—During March 1965 I had numerous sightings at Mitcham, Victoria, of Fork-tailed Swifts, *Apus pacificus*. Other records were numerous also in the suburbs east of Melbourne. On March 11, bush fires occurred at Warrandyte, and fairly heavy smoke hung over Mitcham most of the day. At 5.17 p.m. I saw 20 Fork-tailed Swifts fly north directly into the smoke, which was moving south ahead of the north wind. By 5.35 there were between 40-50 Fork-tails plus about a dozen or so Spine-tailed Swifts, *Hirundapus caudacutus*, all wheeling and moving into the smoke, above it and about the edges. They were no doubt feeding on insects that were caught up in the pall of smoke. The white rump and smaller size of the Fork-tails made comparisons easy, although I only noticed the forking of the tail on two or three occasions. All birds were gone by 6 p.m.—ELLEN M. McCULLOCH, Mitcham, Vic.