

Albatrosses and Petrels in the South-West (W.A.)

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As far as the neighbourhood of Bunbury is concerned the winter of 1935 was a mild one, but farther north in the vicinity of Fremantle conditions seem to have been more severe. At Bunbury we had little in the nature of a prolonged gale until near the spring equinox. Consequently there were no derelict oceanic birds to be picked up on the local beaches. I seldom visit the north beach, which is less accessible to an elderly man, and a "beach comber" has to compete with a clan of five Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*). On my last visit to the above locality I found the remains of a Black Swan and an Orpington hen, both clean picked by the powerful marauders. A small Petrel, such as a Prion, would be carried off bodily without any difficulty.

Diomedea exulans. Wandering Albatross.—During the last week in August, 1935, I found the entire skull with a few white feathers and several of the cervical vertebræ attached. A little farther along the beach was the hip girdle with leg bones complete, but the webs eaten away. With the aid of Mathews's key to the genera, which is based on the structure of the beak,* I had no difficulty in assigning these remains to the present species.

Diomedea melanophrys. Black-browed Albatross.—Early in September last year I found a fine adult of this species on the south beach, and, in October, another in rather battered condition came ashore.

Macronectes giganteus. Giant Petrel.—There was only one local bird of this voracious species come to grief. It is hunger rather than lack of wing-power to ride out the gale that so often overpowers this largest of Petrels.

Halobæna cærulea. Blue Petrel.—For some time past it has been the practice for parties of scholars from the local schools of Perth and suburbs to visit the museums in charge of an officer of the Education Department to listen to talks on the objects of interest, particularly birds, to be seen there. The opportunity to point out that various treasures are to be found on beaches after a severe gale was not neglected and the reference has led to gratifying results, upwards of twenty birds having been received at the museum. Amongst others Master K. Jeffery picked up a fine specimen of the rare Blue Petrel. As far as my records go this is the sixth Western Australian occurrence and the ninth for the whole continent.

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Pterodroma brevirostris. Kerguelen Petrel.—Master W. Hicks had the luck to find a very fresh specimen of this rare Petrel. Ten years ago I found the first Australian specimen of the Petrel, and a little later in the same winter I picked up the remains of a second bird. The latter was fully identified by the late Mr. A. J. Campbell. Master Hicks's find constitutes, therefore, the third Australian record. On September 8 of last year I found the rather battered remains of a fourth, near the South Bunbury bathing sheds. It was in a too odorous condition to carry home, but I there and then measured up beak, wings, legs and toes and took notes on the colouration of what was left of the body plumage. I hid the wreckage securely as I thought, with the idea of bringing it home subsequently, but to my regret some prowling beast of prey carried it off. The Kerguelen Petrel was figured in *The Emu* at the time of my first find.

Daption capense. Cape Petrel.—On September 3 I found two perfect specimens of this prettily-marked bird at the foot of a steep bank at the main bathing beach at Bunbury, where they had evidently died of exhaustion. During the winter scholars brought several to Perth Museum.

Pterodroma lessoni. White-headed Petrel.—On the same date as that mentioned in the foregoing and at the same place I picked up a fine specimen of this Petrel. During my excursions to and from the north-west I never failed to observe a number of this species skimming over the waves on the west coast of Dirk Hartog Island. The western slopes of the island are very steep, and I have little doubt there is a breeding colony to be found there. Nevertheless, the White-headed Petrel is rarely found dead on our south-west beaches. I must say a word as to the colouration of the legs and feet of this Petrel. In my specimen those parts were of a very pale flesh-colour with dark markings on the outer toes and portion of the web. That agrees perfectly with Mathews's description (*Birds of Australia*). But—and this is of importance—as the skin dried the flesh-colour faded into a dull yellow. Our member, Major Whittell, has kindly procured me the information that two specimens in the Adelaide Museum have the colour of the feet described as pale flesh-colour on their accompanying labels, but the parts are now dull yellow. The British Museum Catalogue describes the feet of the White-headed Petrel as dull yellow, without any further comment. To me, it is obvious that this description was taken from dried skins without notes as to the original colouration of the legs and feet.