

KELP GULLS *LARUS DOMINICANUS* OBTAINING FOOD FROM OSPREYS
PANDION HALIAETUS

The feeding niche of Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* in South Africa is not well known but it is accepted that the species may be classified as a generalist forager (Brooke & Cooper 1979), and particularly a scavenger (Siegfried 1977, Brooke & Cooper 1979, Shaughnessy 1980). The observation that individual Kelp Gulls may specialize in particular foraging techniques (Siegfried 1977) is relevant to this note.

During the course of a study of the biology of the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* in the southern Cape, South Africa, various activities of Kelp Gulls associated with feeding Ospreys were noted. At Rondevlei (34 OOS, 22 43E), the most easterly lake of the Touws River estuarine system, we observed Ospreys which used a pole near the lake edge as a regular feeding perch. At times the pole, some 1,6 m in height, was surrounded by water, but, when the Touws River mouth was open and the water level dropped, the pole was surrounded by open beach.

On 13 occasions during the summers of 1981 and 1982 we noticed a Kelp Gull standing at or near the base of the pole. On six of these occasions an Osprey was eating a fish on top of the pole and the gull scavenged pieces of fish that fell to the ground while the Osprey was feeding. On the other seven occasions, the gull stayed near the pole until the Osprey finished feeding and had left the pole, before moving in to scavenge the fallen pieces of fish or, in one case, to remove the remains of the fish carcass left on top of the pole. It was not possible to say whether it was the same gull on all occasions. Sometimes a second gull was nearby and appeared to show interest. In all cases the gulls were adults.

Since the observations were not made systematically we infer that one or more gulls employed this feeding strategy more regularly than we document here. This view is strengthened by the fact that during both summers we frequently saw a gull at or near the base of the pole while the Osprey was feeding but did not record any scavenging during the observation period, which usually ended before the Osprey had completed feeding. Further we often saw a gull at the base of the pole but had not been observing for the Osprey just prior to seeing the gull.

It appears likely that one or more gulls have developed a specialized feeding strategy to supplement their normal food requirements. During the late part of the summer (February/March) the Osprey(s) caught up to four fish a day. These observations confirm the opportunistic feeding behaviour of Kelp Gulls. It is pertinent that we have observed Kelp Gulls persistently chasing Ospreys immediately after the latter had caught fish and were still circling up from the water. From the nature of these interactions we took them to be attempts at piracy but on no occasion were the gulls successful in forcing the Osprey to drop its fish and they usually broke off the chase quickly. However, on one occasion (4 March 1982) an adult gull "mobbed" an Osprey while the latter was perched on the pole eating a small fish. The Osprey hurriedly vacated its perch,

dropping its fish in the process, which the gull picked up and swallowed.

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MORE OBSERVATIONS ON OSPREYS *PANDION HALIAETUS* FORAGING AT SEA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Hockey (1981, *Cormorant* 9: 44) records an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* foraging, unsuccessfully, in the open sea in southern Africa. I have seen Ospreys foraging for prolonged periods at Mapelane (twice), Richard's Bay (once) and near Leven Point (twice) on the coast of northern Natal, South Africa. One of the birds seen at Leven Point caught a fish thought to be a mullet (Mugilidae). One of the birds at Mapelane was seen foraging at sea on three consecutive days. These observations confirm that Ospreys do forage successfully at sea in southern Africa.

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A FURTHER OBSERVATION OF WHITEWINGED BLACK TERNS
CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS FORAGING AT SEA

Whitewinged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* normally feed over fresh or brack water but have been observed foraging at sea off Natal and elsewhere in sheltered bays and inlets in southern African waters (Sinclair 1981).

On 8 February 1982, at high tide, 18 Whitewinged Black Terns were observed foraging close inshore at Stompneusbaai (32 43S, 17 58E) in the western Cape, South Africa. Birds were foraging 5 to 15 m offshore in shallow water (less than 3 m deep) using the normal dipping, as distinct from plunging, technique. Much kelp was washed up on the shore supporting large numbers of kelp flies and their larvae. The tide was higher than it had been on preceding days and the larvae were being washed out into the swell along with some amphipods, probably *Talorchestia* sp. which are abundant at Stompneusbaai (pers.obs.). Whether Whitewinged Black Terns were feeding on both species was not determined. Associated with the terns were 260 Hartlaub's Gulls *Larus hartlaubii* feeding actively while swimming close to the water's edge. Several groups of Common and Sandwich Terns *Sterna hirundo* and *S. sandvicensis*, both predominantly plunge diving fish eaters, were attracted to the feeding group but these passed through without feeding.

European Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were patrolling the high water mark feeding on adult kelp flies. Although several hundred waders were present, very few were actively feeding, possibly having fed to satiation at a lower tidal level.

There are no nearby wetlands supporting as many as 18 Whitewinged Black Terns and these birds probably came from the Berg River estuary 16,5 km to the east.

REFERENCE

SINCLAIR, J.C. 1981. Whitewinged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* foraging at sea in southern Africa. *Cormorant* 9: 42.

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OBSERVATIONS OF DIVING BY PROCELLARIIFORMS AT THE CROZET ISLANDS

During February and March 1982, I took part in a multidisciplinary expedition (Mission Pluricro 1982) which went to almost every island of the Crozet group. During the travels at sea on the M/S *Marion Dufresne*, as well as from land, I kept an eye for Procellariiforms diving, but only observed this behaviour once in a Blackbrowed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* and several times in Northern and Southern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli* and *M. giganteus*.

The Blackbrowed Albatross was flying around the ship off Baie Américaine, Possession Island, when a large piece of fish was thrown overboard and sank. The albatross dived head first from a height of 4 - 5 m after it, and remained underwater for 4 - 5 seconds. It then surfaced with the piece of fish and swallowed it before taking off. I could not see how it swam underwater. This was obviously a case of pursuit plunging *sensu* Ashmole (1971), and which has already been reported by Prince (1980) in 'Mollymauks', presumably Blackbrowed Albatrosses and Greyheaded Albatrosses *D. chrysostoma*. Pursuit diving, from the surface of the water, by Blackbrowed Albatrosses, has already been reported by Nicholls (1979) and Oatley (1979). One case of pursuit plunging is known in the Wandering Albatross *D. exulans* (Voisin 1981).

The giant petrels which I observed diving in the Crozets were resting on the sea, or swimming, and did so in order to avoid breaking waves. They seemed to be reluctant to dive, and most of the time pushed themselves to the top of the breaker with a few powerful strokes of their feet, sometimes outstretching their wings. Sometimes, however, when the foamy water of a breaking wave approached, the birds faced it, outstretched their necks and wings and let themselves be covered by the water. This can hardly be called diving. Rarely did the birds dive under the breakers in the way already described by Voisin and Shaughnessy (1980). I never observed giant petrels diving for food in the Crozet Islands, or at Kerguelen, contrary to their Falkland Islands counterparts, which do it readily (pers.obs.).

The Whitechinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis* were never seen diving. But sometimes birds attracted by food thrown overboard would land hurriedly on the water, breast first, and submerge for a very short time. This 'splash diving' may represent an early stage of diving. In 1980 in the Falkland Islands, I observed a Southern Giant Petrel *M. giganteus solandieri* 'splash diving' when landing among a group of conspecifics struggling for food in the water.

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COMMON TERNS *STERNA HIRUNDO* ROOSTING AT SEA

Roosts of small *Sterna* terns and in particular the Common Tern *S. hirundo* in their nonbreeding range in Africa are normally situated at offshore islands, sandy beaches and most commonly on sandbars at river estuaries (pers. obs.). At their diurnal roosts at river estuaries they regularly bathe in and drink fresh water and can be seen swimming for short periods in shallow water. This note reports two observations of Common Terns roosting at sea.

During September 1975 at 100 m offshore at Dubai Harbour, United Arab Emirates, a flock of c. 100 Common Terns was seen resting on the water. On shore, at the jetty and on rock piles surrounding the jetty, many more gulls and terns were roosting with plenty of available space for more birds to roost. A strong wind was blowing and the stretch of water behind and beyond the jetty was relatively calm and it was on this stretch of water that the terns were roosting. They swam freely quite high in the water with several adopting a sleeping attitude with bills tucked under scapulars.

At 25 km northeast offshore from Durban, Natal, South Africa, on 18 October 1976, a flock of c. 150 Common Terns was seen resting on the water. Our approaching boat disturbed the flock which almost immediately alighted on the sea. The boat fished in the area for two hours during which time the tern flock drifted with the boat downwind. Many birds flew from the main roosting flock to forage nearby whilst many more joined the roost. Birds resting on the water faced and swam into the wind with many actively preening and bathing. None was seen in a sleeping posture. The weather conditions were overcast with slight rain, wind force 5 - 7 with 1 - 3 m wave swell. The coastline was not visible from this position at sea.

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VOËLEILAND, BUFFELJAGSBAAI, SOUTH AFRICA : A LITTLE KNOWN
SEABIRD BREEDING SITE

Voëleiland (or Voëlstene) is situated at 34 45S, 19 36E close inshore in Buffeljagsbaai, southern Cape, South Africa. It consists of several small rocks with a total area above spring high tide of about half a hectare (Fig. 1). The inner rocks are vegetated in places and can be reached on foot at spring low tide.

On 26 July 1980 we rowed out to Voëleiland at high tide and made an inventory of breeding and nonbreeding birds and took notes on plants and terrestrial invertebrates. The dominant plants were orange lichen which is common on the coast and on offshore islands in the southwestern Cape, South Africa, and three vascular plants *Sarcocornia* sp. Chenopodiaceae, *Drosanthemum marinum* and *Prenia vanrensburgii*, both Mesembryanthemaceae. Other plant species included Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* Asteraceae, the only plant in flower, a grass *Sporobolus pungens* Poaceae and young plants of *Australina lanceolata* Urticaceae. Neither *S. pungens* nor *A. lanceolata* have been recorded on any other island off the coast of the southwestern Cape, South Africa (Brooke & Crowe 1982). Terrestrial invertebrates recorded were ants, probably *Messor barbarus capensis*, a jumping spider and a fishtail (Thysanura).

The only breeding seabirds were Bank Cormorants *Phalacrocorax neglectus*, 11 nests being counted on a small rock separated from the others by a kelp-filled narrow channel several metres deep (Fig. 1). On a later visit (9 January 1982) JC observed five occupied nests of Crowned Cormorants *P. coronatus* on this rock. Counts of nests and individuals of these two species are given for six separate visits to Voëleiland (Table 1). Crawford *et al.* (1981) do not list Voëleiland, Buffeljagsbaai, as a known breeding locality of Crowned Cormorants. It thus becomes the 38th known breeding locality and increases the estimated breeding population of the species to 2 670 pairs (Crawford *et al.* 1981).

Table 2 lists the species and numbers of nonbreeding birds counted at Voëleiland on 26 July 1980 : 12 species (176 individuals) were present. On 9 January 1982, a single Rock Pigeon *Columba guinea* was present along with seven Cape Cormorants *P. capensis* and 103 Swift Terns *Sterna bergii*, as well as Crowned and Bank Cormorants (Table 1).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank P.A. Shelton, Sea Fisheries Institute, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, for supplying the aerial photograph (taken on 3 August 1979) from which the figure was drawn.

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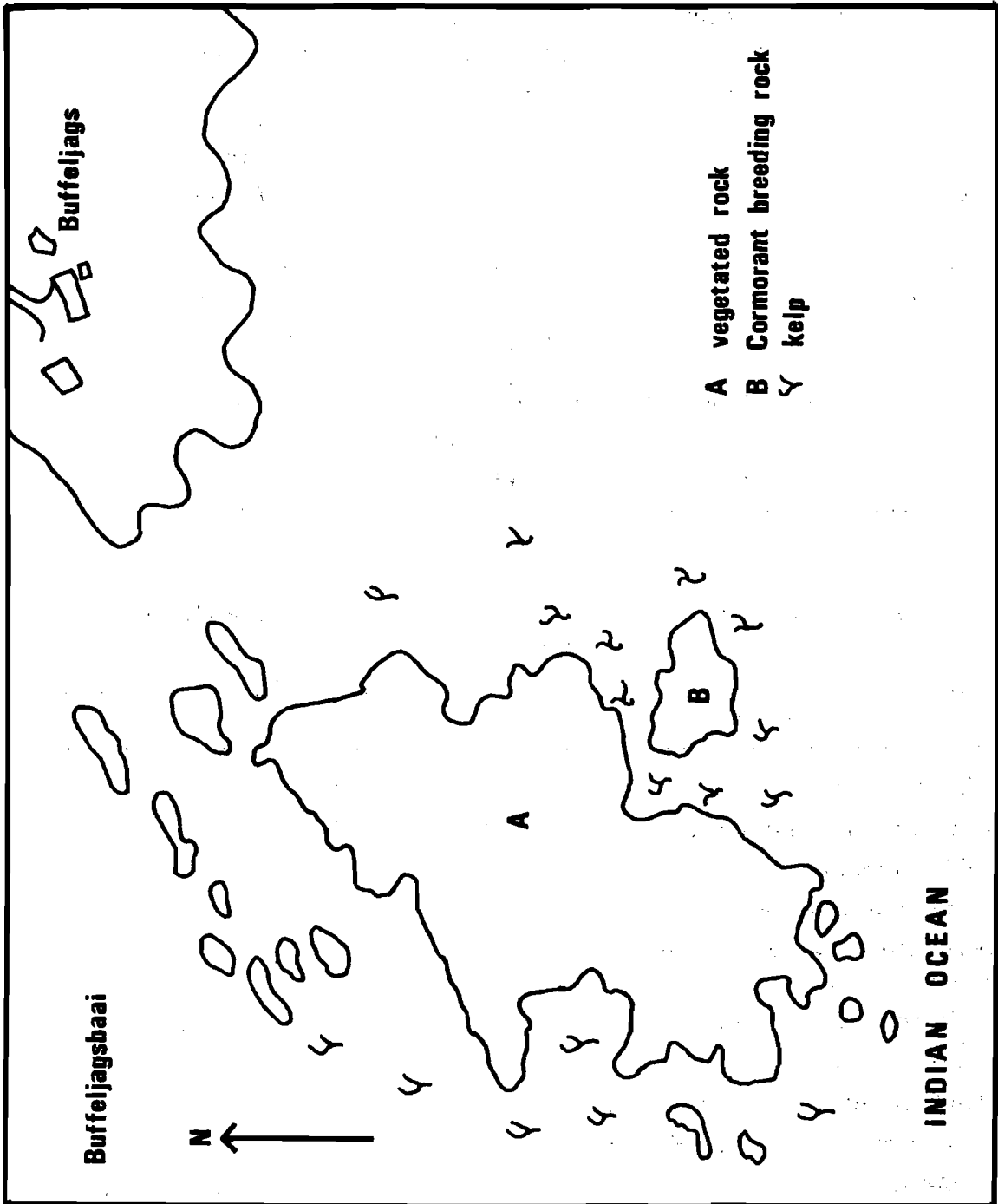


Figure 1

Voëleiland, Buffeljagsbaai, South Africa.

VOËLEILAND, BUFFELJAGSBAAI, SOUTH AFRICA : A LITTLE KNOWN
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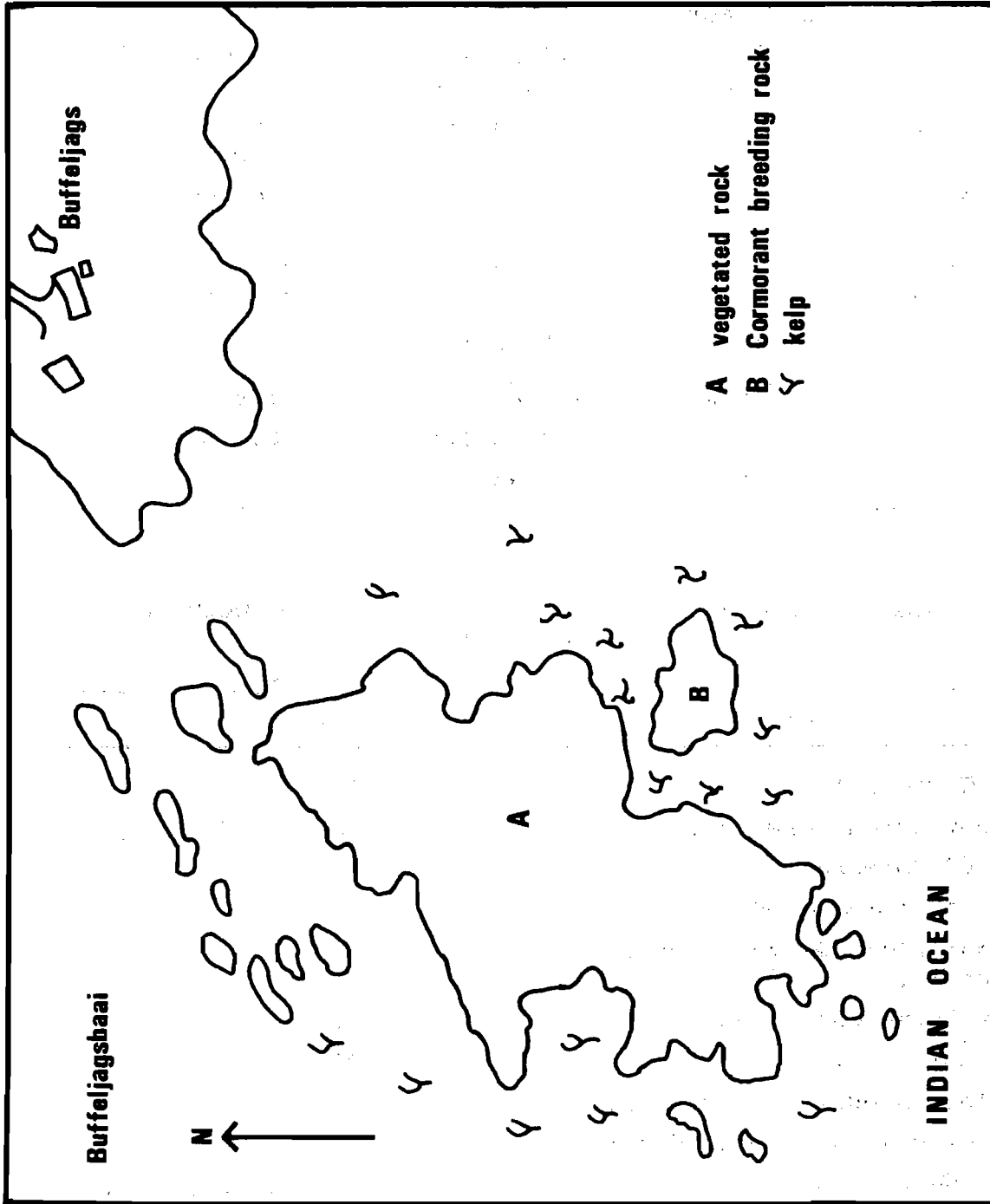


Figure 1

Voëleiland, Buffeljagsbaai, South Africa.

TABLE 1

COUNTS OF CORMORANTS BREEDING AT VOËLEILAND, BUFFELJAGSBAAI

Date	Occupied nests	No. of birds present	Observer
Bank Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>			
8 Aug 1976	13	13 adults 5 fledglings	JC(Cooper 1981)
6 Aug 1978	4	28 adults	A.E. Burger (pers.comm.)
2 Apr 1979	nil	?	P.A. Shelton (<i>in litt.</i>)
10 Sep 1978	nil	18 adults	JC
26 Jul 1980	11	11 adults	JC, RKB
9 Jan 1982	nil	11 adults	JC
Crowned Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>			
26 Jul 1980	nil	12 adults	JC, RKB
9 Jan 1982	5	14 adults	JC

TABLE 2

NONBREEDING BIRDS SEEN AT VOËLEILAND, BUFFELJAGSBAAI
26 JULY 1980

Species	No.
Cape Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	11
Whitebreasted Cormorant <i>P. carbo</i>	22
Crowned Cormorant <i>P. coronatus</i>	12
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1
African Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus moquini</i>	2
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	5
Kelp Gull <i>Larus dominicanus</i>	22
Hartlaub's Gull <i>L. hartlaubii</i>	6
Antarctic Tern <i>Sterna vittata</i>	16
Swift Tern <i>S. bergii</i>	76 (69 ad., 7 juv.)
Giant Kingfisher <i>Ceryle maxima</i>	1
Cape Wagtail <i>Motacilla capensis</i>	2
Total	176

Distribution, population, movements and conservation. *Ostrich* 52: 208-215.

CRAWFORD, R.J.M., SHELTON, P.A., BROOKE, R.K. & COOPER, J. 1981. Taxonomy, distribution, population size and conservation of the Crowned Cormorant *Phalacrocorax coronatus*. *Gerfaut* 71.

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KELP GULL *LARUS DOMINICANUS* SCAVENGING FROM A DEAD SHEEP

Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* seldom occur or feed inland in southern Africa (Brooke & Cooper 1979). On 6 January 1982 we saw an adult Kelp Gull with a bloodstained head and bill pecking at the mouth of a dead sheep lying on its side in wheat stubble on the farm Elandsvlei (34 37S, 20 13E), southern Cape, South Africa, 4,8 km from the sea.

Closer inspection revealed the sheep to be an adult female Marino-type in *rigor mortis* and thus recently dead. The gull had removed one eye and was pecking vigorously at the protruding tongue with little success. It seems likely that these soft parts were all that were available to the Kelp Gull: the thick woolly coat and tough hide would presumably have precluded it from a more vulture-like rôle.

Despite the large number of sheep in the coastal districts of the southern and western Cape, this appears to be the first record of a Kelp Gull obtaining food from a sheep in Africa (Brooke & Cooper 1979). In South America Kelp Gulls apparently trouble lambing sheep (Murphy 1936) but this has not been reported in South Africa.

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GULLS AT BEIRA, MOZAMBIQUE

Brooke *et al.* (1981) indicate that the gull which I saw at Beira, Mozambique, on 28 January 1947, and identified (Benson 1948) as a White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* was probably a Blackheaded Gull *L. ridibundus*. Whatever may have been its true identity, this gull was assuredly not a Blackheaded Gull. Brooke *et al.* (1981) also quote a record of a Blackheaded Gull in nuptial plumage, but obviously sickly, seen by J.C. Sinclair at Beira on 7 December 1974. Although the bird which I saw did have a dark hood, its mantle was much darker than in the Blackheaded Gull: dark slate, rather than blue-grey. I have been familiar with Blackheaded Gulls in the United Kingdom at all seasons over the course of more than 50 years. The relatively pale blue-grey mantle apart, the broad white margin of the front edge of the black tipped wings is at once apparent. Neither of these characters applied to the bird which I saw at Beira.

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A KELP GULL *LARUS DOMINICANUS* WELL INLAND IN SOUTH AFRICA

Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* are rarely seen inland in southern Africa (Brooke & Cooper 1979, *Cormorant* 7: 27-29). We saw a single adult bird on the dam at Droëvlei (33 38S, 18 43E), southwestern Cape on 9 May 1982. This locality is 27 km from the coast and a long way from other large water bodies. It is the furthest inland sighting recorded to date (Brooke & Cooper, 1979).

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NEW DATA ON RARELY RECORDED SEABIRDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Rockhopper Penguin

Eudyptes chrysocome

Two records can be added to the 37 previously published of this species ashore in South Africa (Cooper 1980, *Cormorant* 8: 101).

- (1) Buffels Bay (34 05S, 22 59E), southern Cape c. 23 January 1981. A moulting individual of the northern subspecies *E. c. moseleyi* was taken to the Port Elizabeth Museum where it died on 12 February 1982. It was in late stages of moult on 30 January with plumes half grown and mass 1 995 g (G.J.B. Ross *in litt.*).
- (2) Camps Bay (33 57S, 18 23E), Cape Peninsula, 16 February 1982. A moulting juvenile (no crest feathers) was taken into captivity at the "World of Birds" aviaries where it later died (W. Mangold pers.comm.). It was not identified to subspecies and the specimen has not been retained.

These two records fit the pattern previously shown for Rockhopper Penguins ashore in South Africa.

Blue Petrel

Halobaena caerulea

Every *et al.* (1980, *Cormorant* 9: 19-22) list 20 records of this species in South African waters. In December 1979, G. de Roos (*in litt.* to R.K. Brooke) found the skull of a Blue Petrel with some attached feathers on a beach near the Gouritz River estuary (34 21S, 21 53E), southern Cape. The skull is in de Roos' personal collection in Vlieland, Holland. This record was not known to Every *et al.* (1980) so 21 records, of which 13 are specimen records, now exist for the Blue Petrel in South African waters.

Antarctic Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialisoides

Cooper (1979, *Cormorant* 7: 15-19) lists 25 records of this species in South African waters. The 26th record is of a bird found dead at Rietvlei (33 51S, 18 29E), southwestern Cape, on 19 August 1981 (G.D. Underhill pers.comm.). The specimen has been deposited in the South African Museum as a study skin (SAM Z057305).

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Macaroni Penguin

Eudyptes chrysolophus

Three records of the Macaroni Penguin ashore in South Africa exist (Cooper 1980, *Cormorant* 8: 101-102). A fourth individual was collected alive from the beach at Ryspunt (34 36S, 20 20E), southern Cape, by Mr W. van Wyk on 7 March 1982 and was taken to the SANCCOB Rescue Station two days later where it died on 22 March. On 17 March 1982 it had nearly completed its moult (Fig. 1). Its head plumes were only 42 mm long and did not extend forward of the eye, suggesting it was a juvenile when collected. Its culmen was 61 mm and bill depth at the gonys was 24 mm. It weighed 3 300 g on arrival at the rescue station. The specimen is in the SANCCOB collection of mounted seabirds.

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Figure 1

Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus* : from Ryspunt,
7 March 1982 : fourth South African record.

Photographed by P.J. Haarhoff

In future, sightings of rare seabirds in southern Africa will be submitted to the S.A.O.S. Rarities Committee before publication (see Ian Sinclair's article in this issue). Specimen records and sightings approved by the Rarities Committee will continue to be published in "New data on rarely recorded seabirds in southern Africa" in the *Cormorant* in the usual way.

NEW BREEDING LOCALITY DATA FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN SEABIRDS

Bank Cormorant

Phalacrocorax neglectus

Cooper (1981, *Ostrich* 52: 208-215) lists 44 known breeding localities of the Bank Cormorant. A 45th locality at Stompneusbaai, South Africa, (32 44S, 18 00E) contained three occupied nests (two pairs and a large chick) on a steep granite boulder approximately 500 m offshore on 2 May 1981.

Crowned Cormorant

Phalacrocorax coronatus

Crawford *et al.* (1981, *Gerfaut* 71) list 37 known breeding localities of the Crowned Cormorant. Brooke and Cooper (1982, *Cormorant* 10: 50) list a 38th locality. A 39th locality at Owen Island, South Africa (29 16S, 16 52E) contained two occupied nests and 23 fledglings on low bushes equal to approximately 15 breeding pairs (Crawford *et al.* 1981) on 19 November 1981.

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It is intended to publish an annual list of newly discovered breeding localities of southern African seabirds. The above format should be followed and reports should be restricted to those species already reviewed. To date these are :

Phalacrocorax carbo Whitebreasted Cormorant (Brooke *et al.* (1982) *Gerfaut* 72)

P. capensis Cape Cormorant (Cooper *et al.* (1982) *Fish. Bull. S. Afr.* 16)

P. neglectus Bank Cormorant (Cooper (1981) *Ostrich* 52: 208-215)

P. coronatus Crowned Cormorant (Crawford *et al.* (1981) *Gerfaut* 71)

Larus dominicanus Kelp Gull (Crawford *et al.* (1982) *Ostrich* 53)

Sterna dougalli Roseate Tern (Randall & Randall (1980) *Ostrich* 51: 14-20)

Editor

SEABIRDS OF SOUTHERN MOZAMBIQUE - CORRECTIONS

Brooke *et al.* (1981) said on page 37 that no seabird had been recorded breeding in southern Mozambique. This is, of course, not true. Kirk (1864) recorded Great White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* breeding on a low sandy islet at the Kingane (or Kongane) mouth of the Zambezi River. He also found Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* and Swift Terns *S. bergii* breeding on that island as well as another low sandy treeless island at the Luabo mouth. What we meant to say was that no evidence of breeding had been obtained this century.

Brooke *et al.* (1981) overlooked the records of the Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* in the Addenda to Clancey (1971, pp.163-169), thus stating on page 35 that the records they gave were the first for Mozambique. The other seabird species in the Addenda are the Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*, Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* and Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. The Grey Phalarope should be added to the list given in Table 3D (Palae-arctic migrants) but the records of the other three species do not affect what we said about them.

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COMMENT : THE SPECIES OF SEABIRDS OCCURRING IN
THE AFRICAN SECTOR OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

Based on my experience of over 200 hours of seabird observation in the African sector of the Southern Ocean, I would like to question some of the observations and omissions in the article "Seabird observations in the Southern Ocean south of Africa, summer 1975/76" by M.D. Flora (1980, *Cormorant* 9: 3-7).

The pelagic distribution of Schlegel's (Atlantic) Petrel *Pterodroma incerta* is restricted to the vicinity of its breeding locality, Gough Island. I have seen only one individual east of 5E. Flora counted 54 individuals east of 18E, but failed to record any Soft-plumaged Petrels *Pterodroma mollis*, a superficially similar bird abundant in these waters. Similarly, my records show that Blackbellied Stormpetrels *Fregetta tropica* are fairly common and widespread, whereas Whitebellied Stormpetrels *F. grallaria* are rare and restricted to around Gough Island. I have no records east of 2E, whilst Flora lists 52 sightings. The thin black ventral line that separates these species is often difficult to observe. I suggest that the two species have been misidentified. Flora's Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, which is not mentioned in the text, is also suspect as this is further south than the most southerly documented record by Curtis (1977, *Sea Swallow* 26: 13-14). There are many other species that are notable by their absence. A full list of pelagic species that should be common in this area in summer includes (in addition to Flora's list) Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*, Shy Albatross *D. cauta*, Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*, Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*, White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*, Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*, Kerguelen Petrel *P. brevirostris*, Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*, Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* and diving petrels *Pelecanoides* spp. (near Marion Island). It is possible to see many other less common species. Some of these omissions could be a result of unusual distribution patterns or the short time spent in observation by Flora. However, I suggest that these observations are incomplete and, in part, incorrect.

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