

FIRST RECORDED SIGHTING OF THE IMPERIAL CORMORANT *PHALACROCORAX ATRICEPS* AT
ZAVADOVSKI ISLAND, SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS

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The South Sandwich Islands are a little visited archipelago of volcanic origin in the Southern Ocean. Zavadovski Island (56 18S, 27 35W) lies at the northern end of the chain and is a square shaped island approximately 25 km² in area. No biologists have previously landed on the island and the most recent visit was made in 1962. The avifauna of Zavadovski Island and details of previous visits are summarized by Holdgate & Baker (1979). The Imperial Cormorant or Blue-eyed Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps* has not previously been recorded from Zavadovski Island, although breeding colonies are known on Montagu and Bristol Islands, 105 and 132 km away from Zavadovski Island, respectively. The nearest island where cormorants have been sighted (though are not known to breed) is Candlemas Island, 41 km away.

On 21 February 1988, a helicopter from the H.M.S. *Endurance* landed a party of three biologists and a geologist on Zavadovski Island in the area south of Pungent Point and about 500 m inland. The visit lasted approximately three hours during which the southeastern coastline between Fume Point and Pungent Point was examined. Just north of the latter locality on a small point, eight Imperial Cormorants in adult plumage (including a pair) were seen, standing on nest sites. Four nests were found and these were built entirely from the tail feather quills of penguins, probably reflecting the absence of other nest material. Inspection of the

area suggested 10-15 nests may have been present. No chicks alive or dead or recently fledged birds were seen and it was concluded that if cormorants had previously bred there they had either failed or had not attempted to breed in the 1987/88 season. Three individuals were observed roosting on separate points nearby; at least one bird was in one year old plumage, indicating that cormorants could have bred on Zavadovski during the 1986/7 season. More observations are required to determine if the area around Pungent Point supports a small breeding colony.

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REFERENCE

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