

RECORDS OF THE WEDGETAILED SHEARWATER *PUFFINUS PACIFICUS*
IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN WATERS

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On 18 September 1979, a single small dark shearwater was seen resting on an exposed rocky surface in the Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* colony at Bird Island, Algoa Bay (33 50S, 26 17E). The bird was approached and caught. In the hand it was initially identified as a Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, but on closer examination it was re-identified as a Wedgetailed Shearwater *P. pacificus*. While in captivity it emitted a series of repetitive calls, best described as "ooo-ow", which could possibly be compared with the "cat-like" cries associated with territorial clashes (Serventy *et al.* 1971). In general coloration the bird resembled a Sooty Shearwater with the throat and upper breast paler than the dorsal surface (Fig. 1). The feet and legs were fleshy white with a grey outer toe. The beak was lead grey, the iris brown. The bird was photographed, measured and weighed (Table 1 and Figs 1, 2 & 3).

TABLE 1

MEASUREMENT OF THE BIRD RECORDED ON BIRD ISLAND COMPARED WITH WEDGETAILED AND SOOTY SHEARWATERS

	Wedgetailed Shearwater		Sooty Shearwater
	(i)	(ii)	(ii)
Wing (mm)	277	290 (280-308)	296 (283-304)
Tail (mm)	123	126 (119-138)	88 (80- 94)
Culmen (mm)	40	38 (36- 41)	42 (41- 44)
Tarsal (mm)	46	46 (42- 48)	55 (53- 57)
Mass (g)	406	-	-

(i) Bird Island individual

(ii) Mean and range from Serventy *et al.* (1971)

In addition to this record, two subsequent sightings of single Wedgetailed Shearwaters have been made at Bird Island. On 6 December 1979 a single bird was seen in flight approximately 100 m east of the island. The bird was similar to a Sooty Shearwater in its size and intermittent flapping and gliding flight. However, the wing beats appeared to be not as rapid as those of the Sooty Shearwater and the gliding spells were generally of longer duration. The underwing pattern of the flying bird showed a distinct thin black trailing edge to the wing, which could be seen in the captured bird (Fig. 2). The long wedge-shaped tail was easily noticeable (Fig. 3). The most recent sighting of a Wedgetailed Shearwater occurred on 20 January 1980. The bird was seen flying low over the Cape Gannet colony. It appeared as if it was attempting to land. Unfortunately a search of the area failed to reveal the bird.

Sight records of Wedgetailed Shearwaters have been made previously in South African waters (Sinclair 1978, Samuels 1978, 1979) (Table 2). All records are in the Indian Ocean within the Agulhas Current. Records have been made in both summer and winter months : no clear seasonal pattern is apparent. For identification purposes, Sinclair (1978) compared the bird with a number of tropical and subtropical shearwater/petrel species. However, the presence of Wedgetailed Shearwaters on the eastern Cape coast could possibly lead to misidentification with the similar Sooty Shearwater.

REFERENCES

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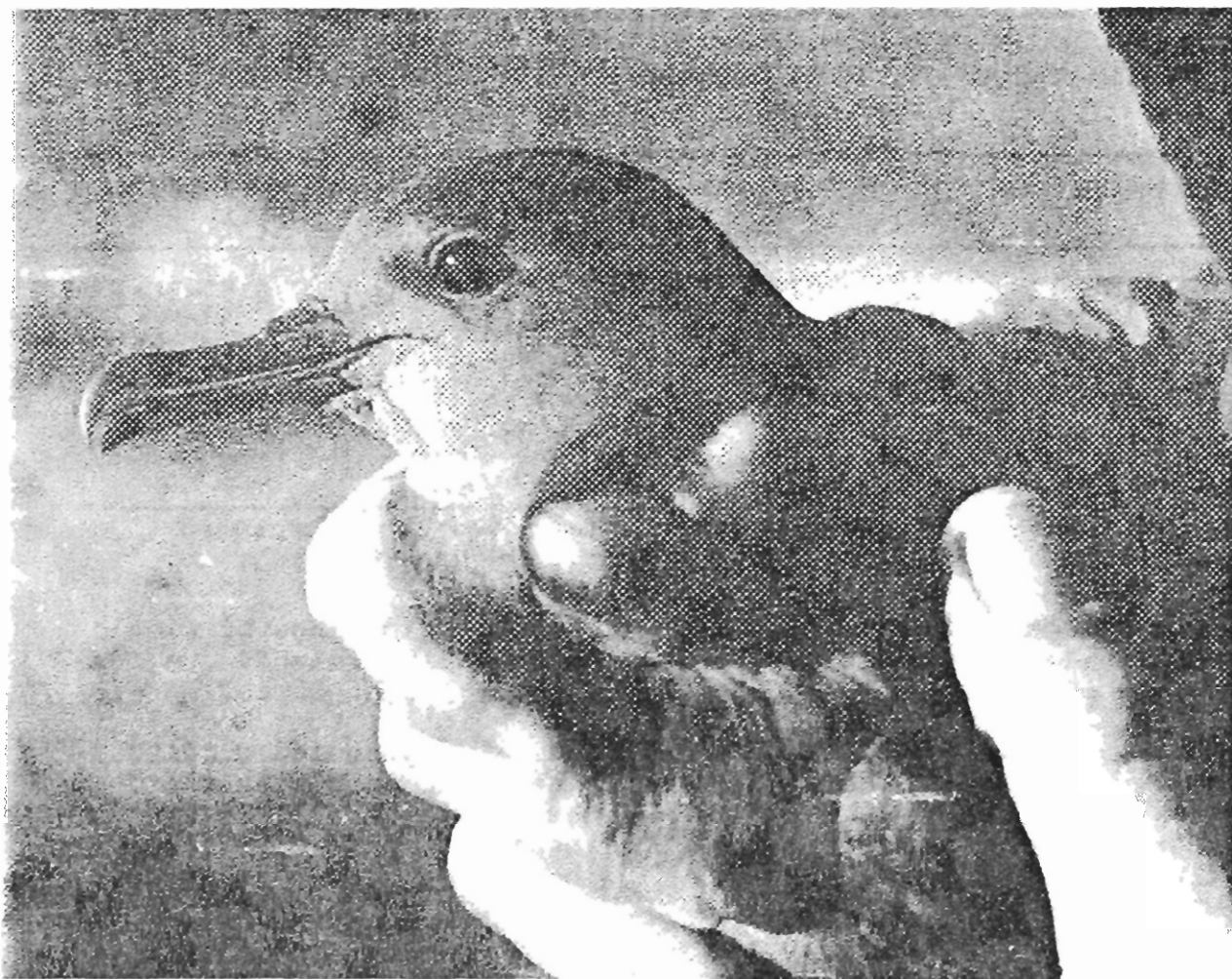


Figure 1

Wedgetailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* in the hand,
Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 18 September 1979

TABLE 2

RECORDS OF WEDGETAILED SHEARWATERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN WATERS

No.	Locality	Date	Number of Birds	Source
1.	26 18S, 34 06E	22 September 1974	8	Sinclair (1978) (sighting)
2.	Off Umhlanga Rocks	14 August 1975	1	Sinclair (1978) (sighting)
3.	Off Port Alfred	9 July 1978	1 (?)	Samuels (1978) (sighting)
4.	Off Port Alfred	29 July 1978	1	Samuels (1978) (sighting)
5.	Off Port Alfred	24 August 1979	2	Samuels (1979) (sighting)
6.	Off Port Alfred	28 August 1979	1	Samuels (1979) (sighting)
7.	Bird Island	18 September 1979	1	Batchelor (photographed in hand)
8.	Bird Island	6 December 1979	1	Batchelor (sighting)
9.	Bird Island	20 January 1980	1	Batchelor (sighting)

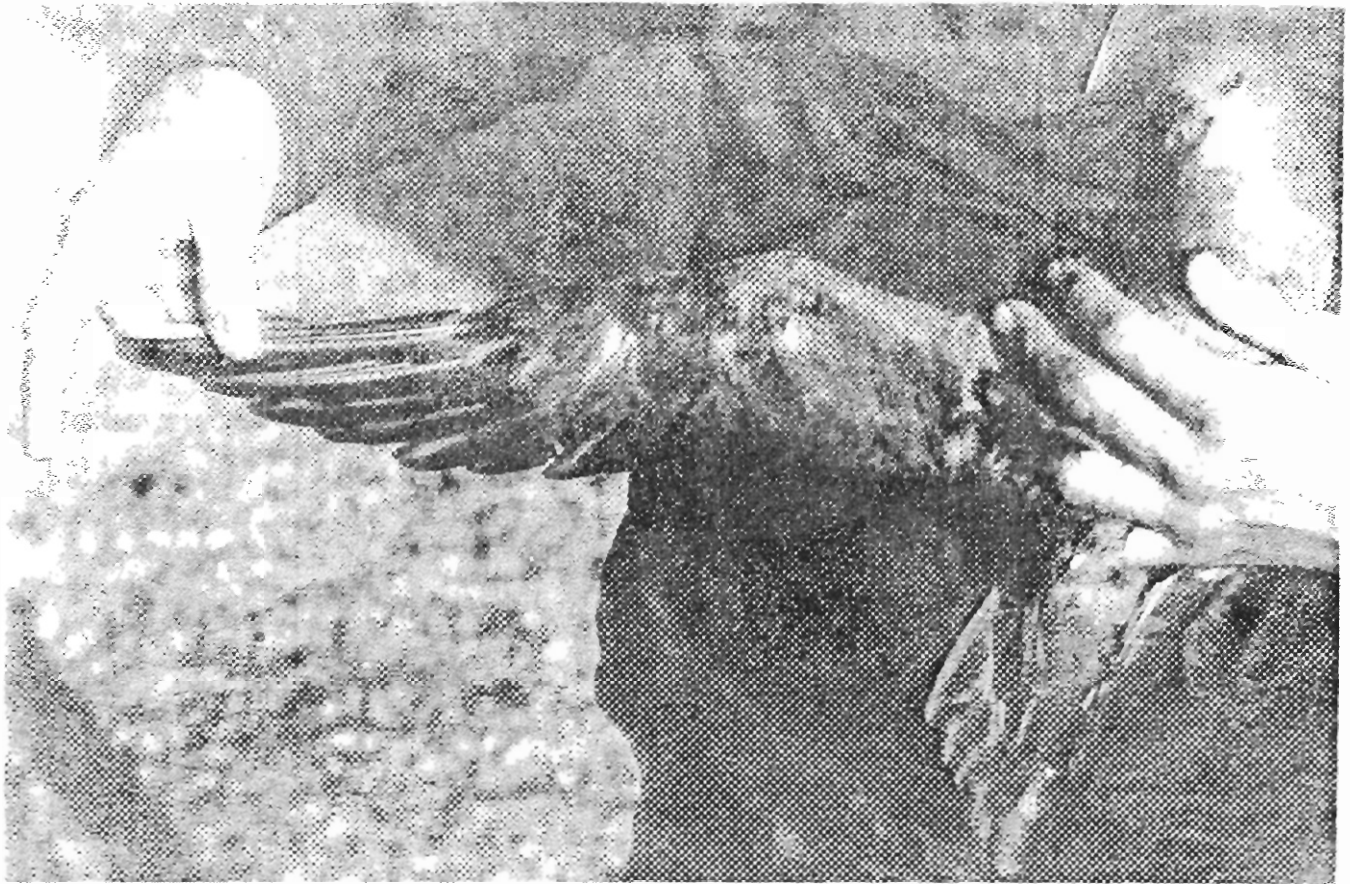


Figure 2

Wedgetailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* in the hand,
Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 18 September 1979, showing
the long tail and dark underwing



Figure 3

Wedgetailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* in the hand,
Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 18 September 1979, showing
its long wedge-shaped tail