

VARIATION IN THE HEAD PATTERN OF THE LESSER NODDY

ANOUS TENUIROSTRIS

The genus *Anous* comprises three species : the Common or Brown Noddy *A. stolidus*, a large species with a robust bill and a pantropical distribution, and two smaller and slender-billed species : the Black or Whitecapped Noddy *A. minutus*, which breeds widely in the tropical sectors of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and the Lesser Noddy *A. tenuirostris*, which is confined to the tropical Indian Ocean. The allopatry of the two smaller species, and the general similarity of their breeding biology, has led some authorities to treat them as a single species *A. tenuirostris*. However, Serventy *et al.* (1971) state that, although there is regional variation between the Pacific and Atlantic populations of Black Noddies *minutus* they are all separable from the 'unvarying' Lesser Noddy *tenuirostris*.

Identification of small noddies is based primarily on difference in head pattern. Typically *minutus* has a white forehead which is sharply demarcated from the black lores; while *tenuirostris* has an ash-grey forehead which merges evenly into the darker lores beneath the eye (Fig. 1). I noticed variation in the head pattern of adult *tenuirostris* during a visit in September 1978 to Wood Island in the Abrolhos Island group, West Australia. There, although most birds had the typical *tenuirostris* head pattern, a small proportion of birds, five of the c. 60 observed, had typical body plumage but an atypical head pattern. In the atypical birds the dark lores were sharply demarcated from the ash-grey forehead in the manner of *minutus* (Fig. 1). Whilst Serventy *et al.* (1971) mention that immature *tenuirostris* "are like adults but sometimes have whiter caps", no mention is made of dark lores. Since the birds I observed in September 1978 were all actively engaged in nest building, it is presumed that all were adults since egg laying apparently reaches a peak in October (Serventy *et al.* 1971). The occurrence of a *minutus*-like head pattern in *tenuirostris* supports the concept that *tenuirostris* and *minutus* are indeed a single species.

If other observers have noticed similar variation in the western Indian Ocean populations or will be visiting colonies in the near future, I would welcome any notes on atypical head patterns.

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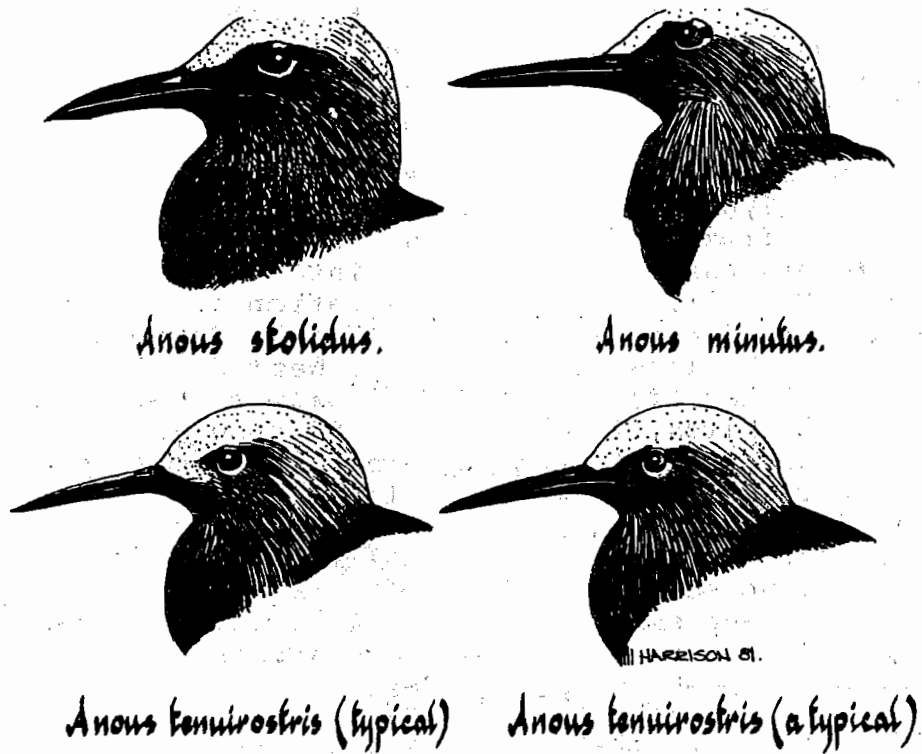


Figure 1
 Head patterns of noddies *Anous*

VAGRANT KELP GULLS *LARUS DOMINICANUS* IN THE
AFRICAN SECTOR OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

On 15 voyages of the M.V. *S.A. Agulhas* in the African sector of the Southern Ocean (30 - 70S, 20W - 40E) from April 1979 to September 1981, three Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* were recorded outside their normal range as defined by Watson (1975). The observers are familiar with the species both at the Prince Edward Islands and in southern Africa. An adult bird was seen by J.C. Sinclair and myself sitting on the ice shelf of the Antarctic mainland near SANAE (70 18S, 02 22W). Since the iris colour was not visible the bird was not identified to subspecies (Brooke & Cooper 1979). Another individual, probably a second-year bird (subterminal tail band, whitish head, dark bill with lighter tip), in heavy moult followed the ship for about an hour on 10 March 1980 at 67 29S, 21 06E. A juvenile was recorded offshore at Gough Island (40 50S, 37 45W) on 26 September 1981 by J. Damgaard-Nielsen (pers.comm.).

In the study area, Kelp Gulls breed only at the Prince Edward Islands (46 50S, 37 45E), with southern Africa, Crozet and South Sandwich Islands being the closest extralimital breeding localities (Watson 1975). Since none was seen on a visit to Bouvet Island (54 26S, 03 24E) (Watkins in press), their breeding status there remains questionable. There are few published records of vagrant Kelp Gulls in the area surveyed (Watson *et al.* 1971). Numerous subadult birds have been recorded at Tristan da Cunha (Wilkins 1923, Hagen 1952, Elliot 1953). The species occurs irregularly at Gough Island (Verrill 1895, Swales 1965) and at Bouvet Island (Solyanik 1959, Holdgate *et al.* 1968). Only one bird has been recorded previously at sea (Watson *et al.* 1971).

The variation in Kelp Gull morphology (Jehl *et al.* 1978, Brooke & Cooper 1979) might be consequent on a low rate of genetic interchange between populations. The paucity of vagrant records, particularly at sea, suggests that continental and island populations are indeed disjunct.

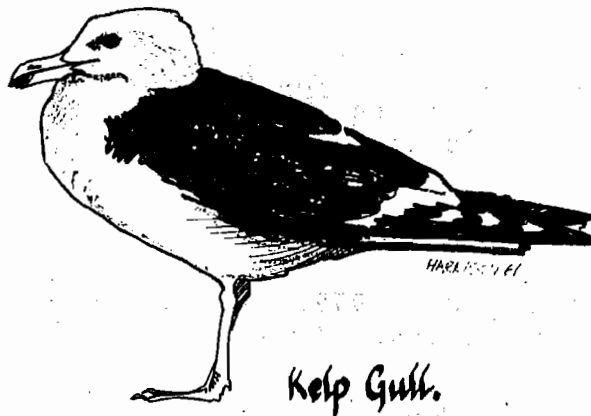
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MORE NONMARINE VAGRANT BIRDS AT THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS

These records comprise three weeks' observations at Prince Edward Island (*sensu stricto*) and 25 months' at Marion Island. The known occurrence of nonmarine vagrants at the Prince Edward Islands up to May 1979 was discussed by Burger *et al.* (1980). Our observations cover the entire period between May 1979 and May 1981.

A total of 19 birds of 11 or 12 species was recorded in this period (Table 1). At least five species (Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Kerguelen Pintail *Anas eatonii*, a falcon *Falco* sp., a wader and a chat) had not previously been recorded. Unfortunately the latter three birds were not identified to species. The unidentified wader was photographed and may have been Knot *Calidris canutus*, or Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*. However, no size comparison is available, and the record must remain undeterminate. Most of the identified birds were Palaearctic migrants with fewer resident African species, as reported by Burger *et al.* (1980). An exceptional record is that of the Kerguelen Pintail, a bird endemic to the Crozet and Kerguelen Islands. The bird was collected and identified on the basis of its small size but it is not known whether it belongs to the Crozet or Kerguelen population. This is the first unequivocal record of a bird reaching the Prince Edward Islands against the prevailing westerly winds, or from an area outside Eurasia and Africa. Ducks have colonized several Subantarctic islands, and were regarded by Burger *et al.* (1980) as possible colonists of the Prince Edward Islands. The number of birds reported during our stay (19 in 25 months) is similar to that recorded by Burger *et al.* (1980) (43 in 64 months).

A Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos* was flying strongly when seen on 27 December 1981, but by 30 December was so weak that it was captured by hand. Two of the European Swallows *Hirundo rustica* seen in April - May 1981 were subsequently found dead. In all three cases the birds were very thin, without visible signs of injury or disease, suggesting that they had starved. This supports the suggestion that lack of available food resources is a major reason why nonmarine vagrants have not colonized the Prince Edward Islands (Burger *et al.* 1980).

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TABLE 1

VAGRANT BIRDS AT THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS. ALL RECORDS ARE FOR MARION ISLAND
UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

Species	Previous records		New records	
	No. of sightings	No. of birds	No. of birds	and dates
Palaeartic migrants				
Common Sandpiper <i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>	3	3	4	(2 on 2 Oct. 79, 28 Jan. 80, 27-30 Dec. 80)
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	-	-	1	(13 Oct. 80)
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	3	6	1	(21 Jan. 81)
European Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	7	9	6	(May 79, 12 Sep. 79, 26 Mar. 81, 3 in April-May 81)
Warbler sp. <i>Phylloscopus</i> sp.	?	?	1	(10 Jun. 79)
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	1	1	1	(20-25 May 79)
Resident African birds				
Cattle Egret <i>Bulbulcus ibis</i>	6	9	1	(14 Jan. 80)
?Laughing Dove ¹ <i>Streptopelia ? senegalensis</i>	?	?	1	(3 Jan. 80)
Oceanic island endemic				
Kerguelen Pintail ² <i>Anas eatonii</i>	-	-	1	(31 May 81)
Unidentified				
Falcon <i>Falco</i> sp.	-	-	1	(24 Mar. 81)
Wader sp. ³ Charadriidae	?	?	1	(Oct. 80)
Chat sp. ¹ Turdidae	-	-	1	(at Prince Edward Island, May 80)

Names of observers : 1. A.D. Hes; 2. R.J. van Aarde; 3. K. Panagis

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WHITENECKED RAVEN *CORVUS ALBICOLLIS* ATTACKING
A COMMON TERN *STERNA HIRUNDO*

On 15 July 1981 I saw a Whitenecked Raven *Corvus albicollis* attack and kill an adult Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* on Die Plaat beach near the Kleinrivier Lagoon (34 25S, 19 18E); southern Cape, South Africa. I did not witness the beginning of the incident so cannot say whether the tern was either sickly or injured prior to the attack.

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PIED KINGFISHER *CERYLE RUDIS* CATCHES CRAB AT SEA

On 12 August 1981 I observed a Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* catch a small crab off the rocks at Glencairn in False Bay on the Cape Peninsula. The bird returned with its prey to a rock where it beat the crab against the rock for a few times before swallowing it.

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A PURSUIT PLUNGING WANDERING ALBATROSS *DIOMEDEA EXULANS*

While working through my fieldnotes from my voyage from the Crozet back to Cape Town, in the second half of April 1974, I found an interesting observation made by M. van Impe, a Belgian algologist who had stayed at Kerguelen Island from January to April that year, and whom I thank here. He told me that one day, as he was working in the Golfe du Morbihan, he saw an adult Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* which plunged head first into the water from a height of about 2 m. In order to dive, the bird, which was flying, folded its wings, but then used them to swim underwater for a short time. Van Impe could not see what was the reason for this unusual behaviour, but it was likely that the bird was on the lookout for food.

There are few observations of underwater swimming by albatrosses. This behaviour has been observed in the Blackfooted Albatross *D. nigripes* (Miller 1942), the Blackbrowed Albatross *D. melanophris* (Nicholls 1979, Oatley 1979), the Shy Albatross *D. cauta* (Gibson 1960), and the Yellow-nosed Albatross *D. chlororhynchos* (A.M. Griffiths, pers. comm. to J. Cooper), but apparently not in the Wandering Albatross. I never saw it in this species when I was at Kerguelen, the Crozets or at Gough Island. It would also appear to be the first observation of a Wandering Albatross actually plunging from the air (pursuit plunging) as opposed to diving from the surface (pursuit diving *sensu* Ashmole 1971). However, Prince (1980) has described 'mollymauks', presumably Blackbrowed Albatrosses and Grey-headed Albatrosses *D. chrysostoma* plunging from the air.

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