

FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF THE ROYAL TERN *STERNA MAXIMA*
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* has been admitted to the southern African list (Clancey 1980) on a sighting made just outside southern Africa from the north bank of the Cunene River mouth on 5 November 1968 (Pinto 1973). Clancey suggested that the Royal Tern probably occasionally occurs further south on the South West African/Namibian coast.

On 29 September 1980 a single Royal Tern was sighted in flight alongside Swift Terns *S. bergii* and Damara Terns *S. balaenarum* in Walvis Bay, South West Africa/Namibia (22 59S, 14 31E). The yellow/orange bill and very white headed appearance first drew attention to the bird as it flew by at c. 100 m. We followed the bird as it flew along the shoreline of the bay where it was first seen fishing and then settling on a sandbar. At rest the bird very closely resembled the Swift Tern but differed in having a slightly more robust bill which was yellow/orange in colour in contrast with the yellowish green bill of the Swift Tern. The head was almost completely white and showed only a small patch of grizzled black and white on the nape which extended forward to end just behind the eyes. In flight the mantle and back colour in direct comparison with Swift Terns was a much paler shade of grey and this field character was noticeable at all times, giving the bird a pale backed look similar to that of the smaller Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*. Both observers have had previous experience with the North American and African races of the Royal Tern.

This is the first sight record of a Royal Tern south of the Cunene River in South West Africa/Namibia and is also the first record of the species for southern Africa.

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WHITEWINGED BLACK TERNS *CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS*
FORAGING AT SEA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Whitewinged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* primarily forages over open stretches of fresh water on its wintering grounds in Africa. In southern Africa the species rarely forages over salt water estuaries and river mouths but does regularly join Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* roosts at river mouths and sandbars (pers. obs.). The species has not been previously recorded in the open sea in southern Africa (McLachlan & Liversidge 1978) although it has been recorded foraging in bays and sheltered inlets of the sea at Sandwich Harbour (Berry & Berry 1975, Whitelaw *et al.* 1978) and at Bird Island Lambert's Bay (R.K. Brooke, J. Cooper pers. comm.) on the west coast of southern Africa.

On 31 January 1981, at *c.* 1,5 km offshore at the Umgeni River estuary, Natal, South Africa, 28 Whitewinged Black Terns were watched foraging with *c.* 50 Common Terns. The sea was calm with a small 1 - 1,5 m swell with no wind and overcast sky. The Whitewinged Black Terns and Common Terns were both foraging by dipping their bills into the water although the latter did occasionally plunge dive to retrieve food items. This foraging activity continued for 20 minutes during which time the feeding terns drifted further out to sea to a distance of 2,5 - 3 km. Two dark phase Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* broke up the foraging party by jointly harassing a Common Tern. The Common Terns dispersed in all directions low over the sea whilst the Whitewinged Black Terns joined together in a tightly packed flock, gained height and flew quickly towards the shore and vanished inland.

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CAPE SHOVELERS *ANAS SMITHII* AT SEA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, Redbilled Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*, Yellowbilled Duck *A. undulata* and South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana* have all been recorded at sea in southern Africa (Baron 1977, Cooper 1977, Hall & Every 1979). On 19 March 1981 I observed a flock of 30 Cape Shovelers *Anas smithii* at sea about 20 m from the shore in Radford Bay, Lüderitz (26 40S, 15 09E). The birds were not observed foraging but there was abundant algal growth present at the time. These birds were almost certainly from the population associated with the nearby Lüderitz Sewage Works, where 28 were present later on the same day. It is interesting to note that the Yellowbilled Ducks observed at sea were also close inshore near a coastal sewage works (Hall & Every 1979). So far, among the Anseriformes only the South African Shelduck has been recorded foraging at sea in southern Africa (Ryan 1980).

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HALL, P.R. & EVERY, B. 1979. Yellowbilled Duck at sea. *Cormorant* 7: 33.
RYAN, P. 1980. South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana* feeding at sea in South Africa. *Cormorant* 8: 27.

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White-breasted Cormorants ~ Cape Point

OSPREYS *PANDION HALIAETUS* FORAGING AT SEA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

A single Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was observed foraging at sea off the mouth of the Gamtoos River, eastern Cape, South Africa (33 58S, 25 04E) by PARH and A.L. Batchelor on 16 September 1980. The bird foraged unsuccessfully by plunging into the sea: five plunges and nine aborted stoops were made during a 14 minute foraging bout. Ospreys have been recorded foraging in Durban Bay in many months of the years 1973 - 1975, sometimes successfully, (R.K. Brooke *in litt.*), and a single bird was observed foraging at sea, again unsuccessfully, at Mazeppa, Transkei (Godfrey 1934). Brooke and Sinclair (1978) did not include the Osprey in their list of southern African seabirds: there is, however, no question that the species does forage at sea and should therefore be accorded "seabird status" in southern Africa.

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DARTER *ANHINGA MELANOGASTER* FORAGING AT SEA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* is essentially a freshwater species but occasionally occurs in estuaries and sheltered inlets of the sea (Cramp & Simmons 1977). On 17 May 1980 at Smitswinkelbaai, Saldanha (33 01S, 17 58E) I observed a single Darter foraging by repeated diving in the sea some 30 m from the shore. There are few sheltered inlets on the southern African coast and this is apparently the first record of the Darter at sea in the region.

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A LONGTAILED SKUA *STERCORARIUS LONGICAUDUS* INLAND IN THE
KALAHARI GEMSBOK NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA

A Longtailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* was photographed in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, northern Cape, South Africa on 28 May 1980 by H. Gerretson and B. Wilkins who kindly lent me their pictures. The bird was seen beside the Auob Valley Road between Klein-Skrypan and Urikaruus at approximately 26 59S, 20 18E. The locality is approximately 500 km from the Atlantic Ocean and, not surprisingly, the bird is a new record for the park (Mills 1976).

The skua was eating what appeared to be termite alates. It was photographed from about 8 m before it took off, circled and flew away. It was identified by its very long tail streamers and slender bill.

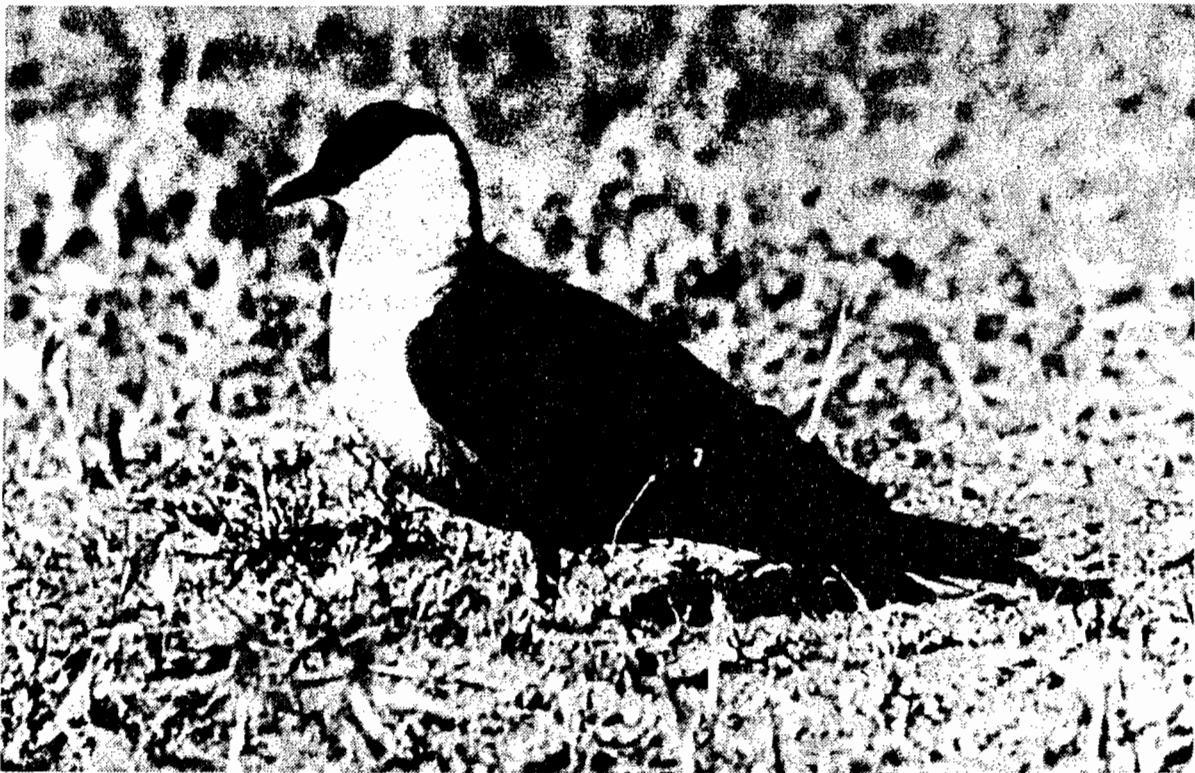
The Longtailed Skua occurs regularly in summer in the waters of the Benguela Current off the west coast of southern Africa (Lambert 1980). The species has been recorded inland elsewhere (Togo) in the Afrotropical region outside southern Africa (De Roo & Van Damme 1970) and it seems likely the individual considered here had been blown inland by bad weather from the Atlantic Ocean.

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Longtailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park

Photographed by H. Gerretson

EUROPEAN STORMPETRELS *HYDROBATES PELAGICUS*
FEEDING BY DIVING OFF SOUTH AFRICA

Stormpetrels usually forage by hovering and pattering over the water; this behaviour keeps them at a precise height above the surface from which they pick up plankton, small fish and oily and fatty substances (Cramp & Simmons 1977). On 24 January 1981, approximately 100 European Stormpetrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* were observed feeding on fish offal and chum floating on the surface 2 km off Gansbaai, southern Cape, South Africa (34 35S, 19 21E). Although most birds fed by pattering, some individuals were on occasion seen to dive to about 300 mm. The pieces of food taken by diving were noticeably larger than those taken on the surface. Wings were outspread underwater and may have been used for propulsion. The birds continued their pattering flight immediately on resurfacing. All food taken was eaten on the wing.

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