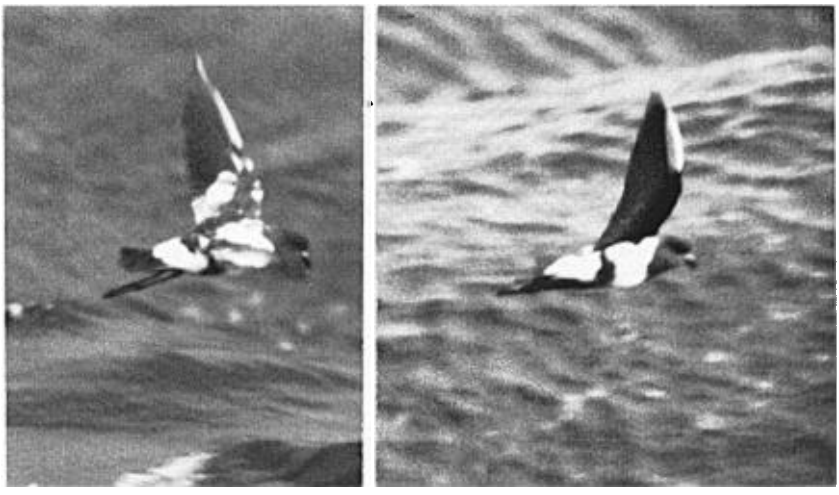

Figure 1. Aberrant Wilson's Petrel—from Kodachromes by Joanne Trimble.

Aberrant Wilson's Petrel on the Newfoundland Grand Banks.—In early September 1966 my wife and I spent eight days aboard a fishing dragger on the Newfoundland Grand Banks to make ornithological observations and photographs. During most of this time we remained about 260 nautical miles SSE of St. John's, Newfoundland. While positioned at 44° 30′ N, 50° 32′ W during a strong south wind and heavy seas the morning of 6 September, we observed a small black and white storm petrel in the company of Wilson's Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*). The bird, studied and photographed while the boat was hove to, was of the same size and proportions as the accompanying Wilson's Petrels, had the same long legs and yellow-webbed feet, and fed and flew in the same manner. These characteristics seem to indicate that the bird was an aberrant Wilson's Petrel. As the photograph shows, the plumage had extensive zones of black and white and the bill had a small yellow region at the base. All plumage characters were symmetric, and one of the most striking marks was a horizontal black band across the lower belly.

Although variations of this sort are extremely rare, similar examples have occurred before. In their discussion of the so-called "Pealea phenomenon" which is characterized by a white belly with dark streaks, Murphy and Snyder (Am. Mus. Novitates no. 1596, 1952) mention several aberrant Wilson's Petrels taken near Banks Peninsula, New Zealand. A bird seen in the Arabian Sea by D. M. Neale in early summer 1960 was "white with a dark patch on the nape and upper rump and dark shafts to the primaries and tail feathers" (W. R. P. Bourne, pers. comm.). As to the origins of these aberrations, one can only speculate.—Benjamin Trimble, *47 Delancey St., New York, New York.*

An egret observed on St. Paul's Rocks, equatorial Atlantic Ocean.—In April, 1963, the research vessel "Chain" of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution landed four geologists, including the second author, on St. Peter and St. Paul rocks (St. Paul's Rocks), at 00° 56′ N, 29° 22′ W. In one of the spray pools of the flats on Southwest (Main) Islet, we observed and photographed (Figure 1) an egret that, considering its size and posture, was probably a Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*).

St. Paul's Rocks being located roughly halfway between Africa and South America and close to the axis of the southeast trade winds, may offer a practical stop-over point for birds emigrating from Africa to South America. Our observations (*Oceanus*, 12(4): 2–16, 1966) during landings in 1963 and 1966 indicate that the islets could offer a way station only to wading fish- or crab-eating birds, or to birds predaceous on fledgling boobies or terns. The fish-filled spray and wash pools of St. Paul's are apparently not fished by the resident bird population and could provide a wandering egret with ample food to restore its strength. However, only under very exceptional conditions could these islets offer a supply of fresh water, and this may be the critical variable in a successful westward emigration via St. Paul's. Geological and paleontological evidence (MS) shows that fresh water has probably been scarce on the islets since the Pleistocene.

K. C. Lint's (*Auk*, 79: 483, 1962) reported capture of a healthy Cattle Egret at sea, 570 miles west (and downwind) from the Central American mainland, indicates that the passage from Africa to St. Paul's (about 1,050 miles from Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone) would be quite possible for these birds with a steady following wind. The shortest passage from Africa to South America (about 520 miles) is almost across wind. However, the downwind passage to the Guianas coast is within a reasonable range.

A steady trickle of larger African wading birds might be expected to pass through St. Paul's Rocks to South America, but none were observed in 1966 during landings on 19 and 21 March or during several days of working in the area.

The cruise on which this observation was made was supported by the U. S. Office of Naval Research (contract NONR-2196(00)) and the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission (contracts AT(30-1)-3010 and AT(30-1)-2174). This is contribution number 1891 from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.—VAUGHAN T. BOWEN, *Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Massachusetts,* and GEOFFREY D. NICHOLLS, *Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester, England.*

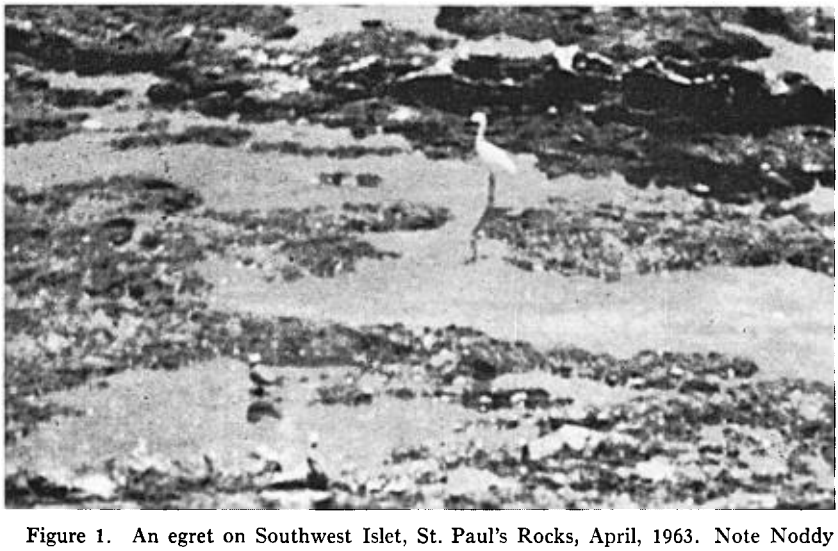

Figure 1. An egret on Southwest Islet, St. Paul's Rocks, April, 1963. Note Noddy Terns in foreground, for size comparison. The original photograph by G. D. Nicholls has been deposited with the U. S. National Museum–Smithsonian Institution.