

sion ceased. So far as we know, this is the first time the "kicker" song has been noted in this area, and we should emphasize that at the time this took place we were not aware of the Reynard-Harty paper and fully expected—hoped—that the bird coming into view would be a Yellow Rail.

Reynard and Harty raise some natural questions related to the "kicker" song (why is it so rare?, what is its purpose?), but they clearly feel the identity of the singer has been completely established and the "mystery" definitively solved. Although our own experience was certainly equally absolute, we feel there remain a few aspects sufficiently unsatisfying to raise the question of whether the matter is yet closed, after all. For example, might it be possible that the Yellow Rail actually does give this song, but that an occasional Virginia Rail does also (occasionally)? Or perhaps the Black Rail, which has often been flushed (without mention of the Virginia Rail) in an area where this song was being given. That is, the Virginia Rail is relatively numerous enough that if the "kicker" song is only given by the Virginia, the rarity of the song would seem to imply that it is given only under rather incredibly special circumstances. Also,

although a number of experienced observers long felt that the song was not given by the Yellow Rail, others equally experienced felt that it was. We have two independent proofs now that the Virginia Rail does give it, but no proof that no other rail does not (and indeed will never have such proof—only negative evidence—if in fact no other rail ever gives this song). And again, what about the paper of Ames, the identification of the song from a captive bird? It seems at least possible that the "ornithological mystery" is not completely solved after all, and that one or more chapters might yet remain to be added.

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### A Black-capped Petrel north of Bermuda/R. G. B. Brown\*

On April 9, 1973 the Canadian Survey Ship "Baffin" was in the Gulf Stream at 37°57'N 62°30'W, enroute from Bermuda to Halifax N.S. The weather was clear and sunny, with the wind NW at 30 knots. A fairly large petrel crossed our bows, heading northwest; it was in view for about a minute, and at its closest was c. 100 yards from the ship.

The upper surface plumage pattern showed a small area of black on the crown; the rest of the head and the neck were white; the back and wings were medium brown, possibly darker on the primaries; the rump and most of the tail were white, but there was a narrow dark band on the upper surface of the tail, near the tip. The underparts appeared to be all white, except for a narrow dark border on the underside of the wings. The bird flew with little flapping in a fast glide, with a swoop-and-soar motion which, at its highest, was about 30 feet above the sea.

The plumage pattern at first suggested a Greater Shearwater, *Puffinus gravis*, but the white on head, neck and rump was far too extensive; the

dark area on the crown was far too small, and could only be seen with difficulty. The only other Atlantic species which fits this description is the Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*, in particular, the subspecies *P. h. hasitata*, which breeds in small numbers on Hispaniola, and possibly elsewhere in the Caribbean (Palmer 1962).

There have been several recent sightings of Black-capped Petrels in the Atlantic; Morzer Bruyns (1967) saw several off the coast of Florida in September 1966, one was seen off the Carolinas in October 1972 (*Am. Birds* 27: 41), and a dead bird was found in Florida in June 1972 (*Am. Birds* 26: 847). This Gulf Stream bird seems unusually far north, considering that the breeding season on Hispaniola probably extends into April (Palmer 1962).

I am grateful to Dr. W. R. P. Bourne and David B. Wingate for their comments on this sighting.

Mörzer Bruyns, W. F. J. 1967. Black-capped Petrels *Pterodroma hasitata* in the Atlantic Ocean *Ardea* 55: 270.

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\*Canadian Wildlife Service, Marine Ecology Laboratory, Bedford Institute, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada.