

## FIRST SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECORD OF ANTARCTIC PETREL

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On the afternoon of 7 September 1978, Anita Smyth and myself were walking the ocean beaches between Goolwa and Victor Harbour in search of beach-washed seabirds. Approximately two km west of Middleton, I found a dead bird which was almost immediately recognizable as an Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*.

Even though the specimen was in poor condition, the broad white wing-stripe across the whole of the trailing edge of the upper wing, except for the tips of the primaries, was clearly noted. This wing-stripe, covering about half of the total wing area, is diagnostic of *T. antarctica*. The remainder of the upperparts, except the tail, and the head were dark brown in colouration. The tail and lower rump were white with the tail narrowly tipped dark brown. The underparts were wholly white except for a narrow dark border to the underwing. The feet appeared pale and the bill was blackish.

The petrel was deposited in the South Australian Museum; and one outstretched wing and a skeleton have been prepared (B 31574). Measurements are as follows: wing 286 mm, tail 111 mm, tarsus 41 mm, culmen (unfeathered) 36 mm. The stomach was examined and the beaks of two small cephalopods were found (S. A. Parker, *pers. comm.*).

In the week before 7 September, strong winds, ranging from NNE to NNW, of up to 35 knots per hour were recorded in the area. On that day, a number of other beach derelicts were found in addition to the petrel. They included one Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris* (deposited in the S.A. Museum), one Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*, one Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*, one Slender billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri* and three Flesh-footed Shearwaters *Puffinus carneipes* (one of which was deposited in the S.A. Museum).

There was, until recently, some doubt as to whether the Antarctic Petrel should be officially included in the Australian Checklist of birds. Condon (1975) does not list it, although it is included in the recent list of English names for Australian birds (R.A.O.U., 1978).

Serventy et. al. (1971) note that it is a "rare straggler to Australian seas, no specimens having been collected in our region except at sea" (p. 88). The Antarctic Petrel is closely associated with the pack ice and icebergs of the Antarctic region, upon which it often settles, and is only "a rare straggler to seas south of Australia" (Slater, 1970).

In addition to this specimen, there have been two other derelict Antarctic Petrels recently found on Victorian beaches (A. Smyth, *pers. comm.*). The three birds represent the first beach-washed specimens of the species found in Australia; and it has certainly not been recorded from South Australia previously. It is relevant to note that during the winter of 1978, large numbers of Southern Fulmars have been found beach-washed on the beaches of southern Australia. This species is often found together with *T. antarctica* and is similarly associated with the Antarctic pack ice.

I should like to thank Mr. S. A. Parker for his assistance in providing details of the specimens.

## REFERENCES

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