

## NEW AND RARE BIRDS ON CAMPBELL ISLAND

By F. C. KINSKY, *Dominion Museum*

### INTRODUCTION

Campbell Island is one of the best known of the New Zealand subantarctic islands, not only because it was visited fairly regularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but also because it has been permanently inhabited since 1941 (first as a coast watching station during the 1939-45 war, then as a permanent weather station established in 1945). The two most comprehensive bird lists recently published are contained in Westerskov's (1960) "Birds of Campbell Island" and in Bailey and Sorensen's (1962) "Subantarctic Campbell Island." In these two publications the authors have collated all available information on Campbell Island birds, and the resulting lists can be accepted as complete, considering all the information then available. In their introductory chapter to the birds of Campbell Island, Bailey and Sorensen (1962: 91) state that "sixty-one species of birds have been recorded from Campbell Island. Only twenty-six have been definitely noted breeding, but it is entirely likely that additional ones will be observed in the days to come." In the short period of six years, Bailey's above prediction has become a fact, mainly thanks to the intense interest taken in the island's fauna by numerous members of the meteorological parties occupying the island, of which several spent more than one year (the usual length of stay) on Campbell Island.

The following list contains birds not previously recorded from Campbell Island and in addition, some notes on species previously considered very rare, or included in the Campbell Island list from a single reported sighting.

This list, *inter alia*, contains nine species new to Campbell Island, including three species newly established, and has been compiled from the writer's own observations during his visit to Campbell Island in January, 1968, and from reports received from the following members of meteorological parties:

C. M. Clark, Officer-in-Charge 1961/62 and 1964/65.

A. Wright, Officer-in-Charge 1962/63.

C. G. Surrey, Cook 1964/65, 1965/66 and 1967/68.

D. Paull, Meteorological observer 1964/65 and 1966/67.

A. M. Bromley, Meteorological observer 1966/67.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer's thanks are due to the above members of the meteorological parties for their informative reports, and in particular to Messrs. G. Surrey, D. Paull and A. Bromley for their generous assistance during the writer's visit to Campbell Island in January, 1968. Thanks are also due to Mr. B. D. Bell, a member of the 1969 Canterbury University Campbell and Antipodes Islands expedition for permission to peruse his field notes and to publish his observations on Little Shags made during the expedition's visit to Campbell Island.

The kind help of the Ministry of Transport, Raoul and Campbell Island Administration, and the hospitality extended to the writer during his stay on Campbell Island is herewith gratefully acknowledged.

## FAMILY SPHENISCIDAE (Penguins)

Up to 1964, six species of penguins had been recorded from Campbell Island. Three species are known to breed there, i.e. Yellow-eyed Penguins (*Megadyptes antipodes*), Rockhopper Penguins (*Eudyptes crestatus*) and Erect-crested Penguins (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus sclateri*).

Three other species have been recorded as stragglers only. King Penguins (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) occur on Campbell Island mostly as single individuals, but fairly regularly every year; Royal Penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus schlegeli*), occur as regular stragglers from Macquarie Island, but sometimes visit Campbell Island in small groups often coming ashore to moult; and two Fiordland crested Penguins (*Eudyptes p. pachyrhynchus*) were recorded on Campbell Island; the first in January, 1945 (DM 14755), and the second on 21st January, 1969 (R. H. Taylor, pers. com.).

Two additional species of penguins can now be recorded from Campbell Island.

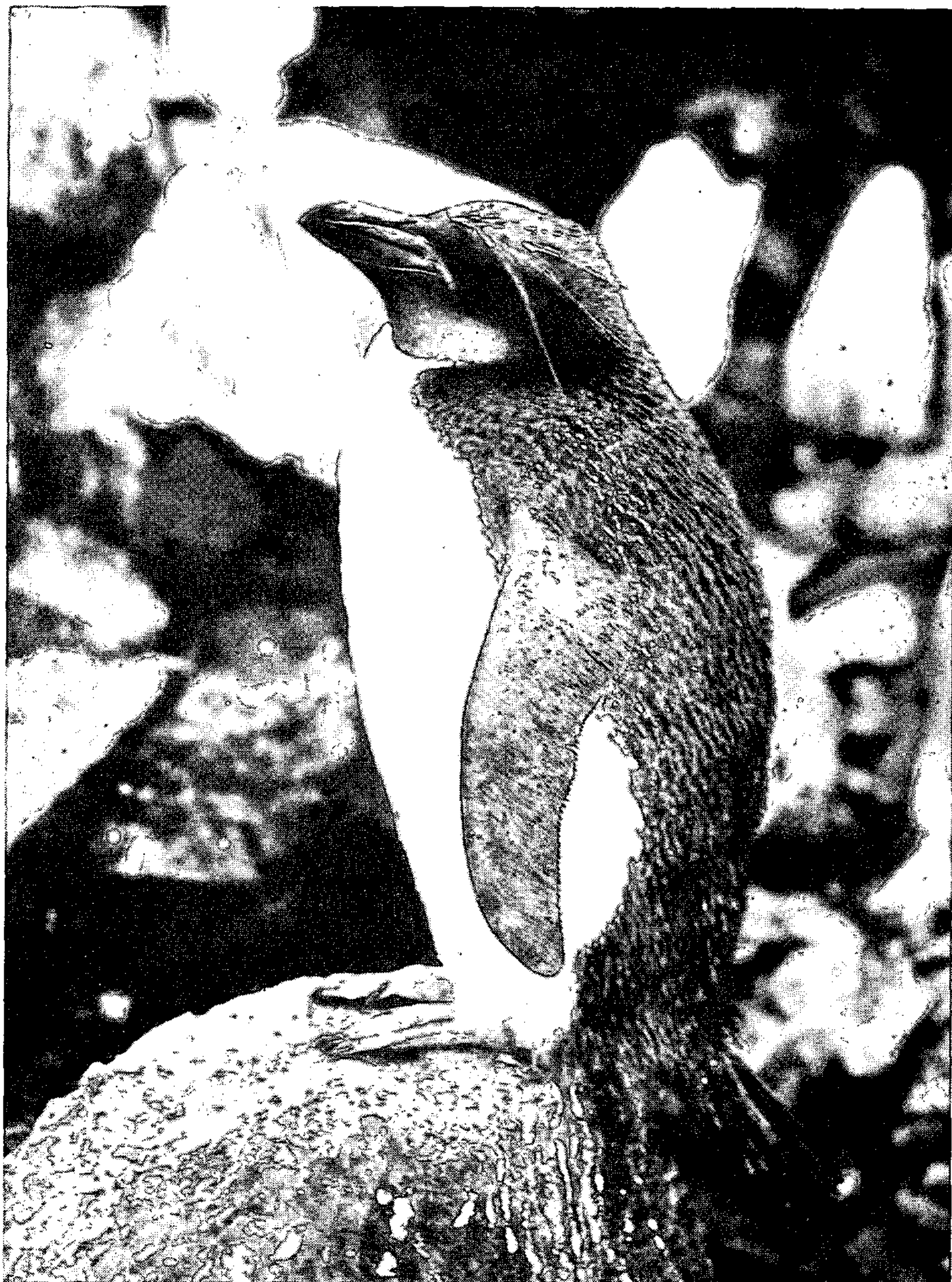
Gentoo Penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*)

An individual of this species was seen and photographed near the jetty in Perseverance Harbour on 29 December, 1964, and was seen in the same vicinity on 9 January and 3 March, 1965. An additional sighting of the species was made on 8 August, 1965, near Shoal Point (also in Perseverance Harbour). This was most probably a straggler from Macquarie Island, where *P. papua* breeds in numbers. If these sightings were all of the same bird, it must have remained in Perseverance Harbour for at least eight months.

Macaroni Penguin (*Eudyptes c. chrysolophus*)

During the writer's visit to the large penguin colony in Penguin Bay on 19 January, 1968, a group of five *Eudyptes chrysolophus* was found resting together on a steep slope in the middle of breeding Rockhopper Penguins. Four of these birds were Royal Penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus schlegeli*), whereas one was a Macaroni Penguin (*Eudyptes chrysolophus chrysolophus*). This bird was collected and its identification was later confirmed by Dr. R. A. Falla. The skin of this specimen, an adult female, is now in the Dominion Museum (DM 13265). This bird had been seen and noted "as unusual" by station personnel in the same area in December, 1967, and is the first of its kind ever to have been collected in New Zealand. Two other specimens are known to have occurred in the New Zealand region, i.e. one bird was sighted on Snares Island during the 1968/69 summer (Warham, 1969: 285) and a third bird, an adult male, was collected by Dr. Falla on Macquarie Island in December, 1957. This specimen is now in the Dominion Museum collections (DM 8963).

Macaroni Penguins breed in large numbers on subantarctic islands in the Indian and the Atlantic Ocean sectors, but only recently have they been found straggling to the Ross Sea and New Zealand areas. In addition to the above three specimens, two immature birds were collected respectively at Cape Hallett, in February, 1964, and on Sabrina Island, Balleny Islands, in March, 1964 (Hatherton *et al.*, 1965).

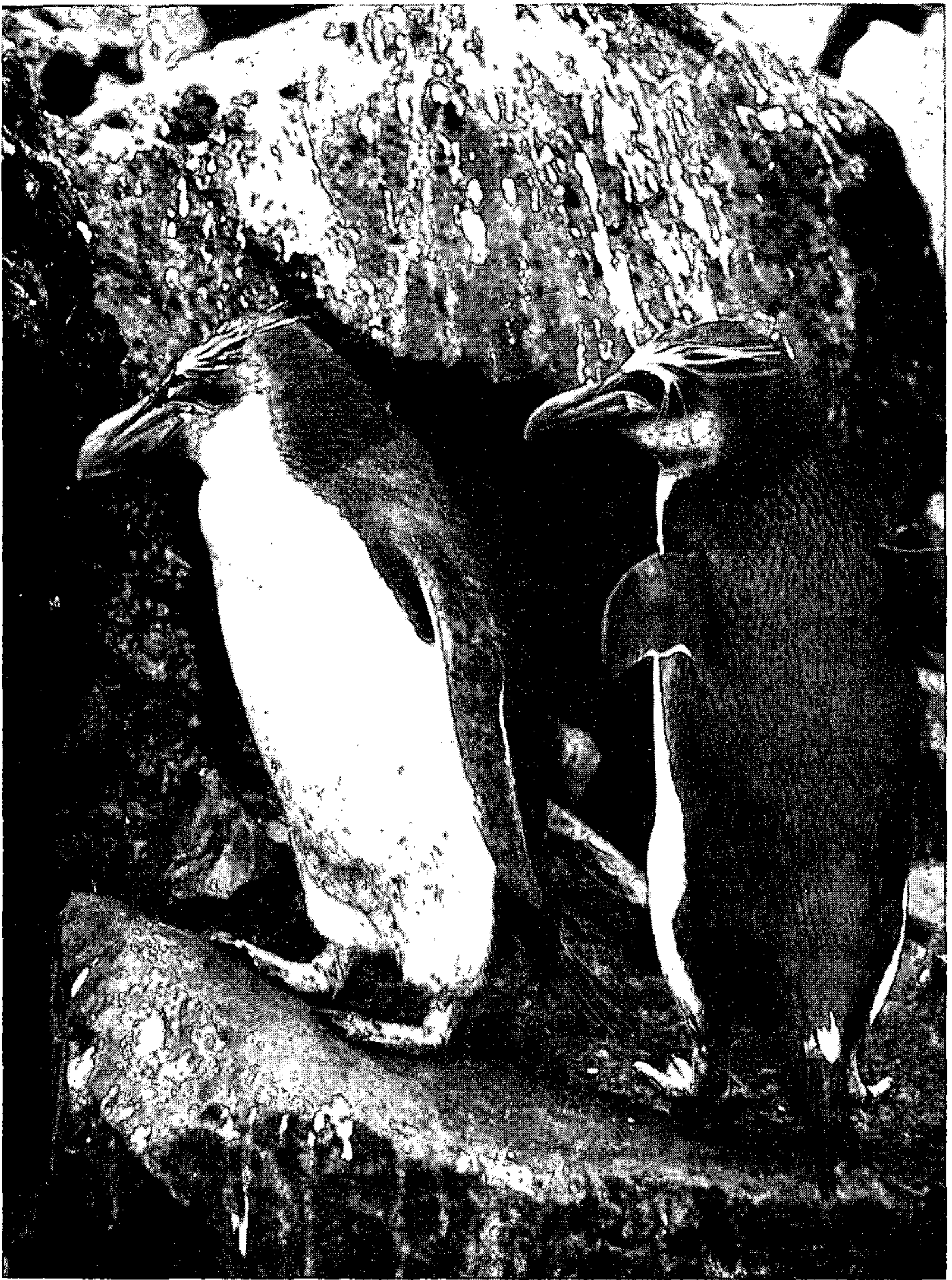


[F. C. Kinsky

Plate XXXIII — Macaroni Penguin (***Eudyptes c. chrysolophus***) adult female, Penguin Bay, Campbell Island, 19 January, 1968.

Two subspecies of *E. chrysolophus* have been described up to the present time, i.e. Macaroni Penguin (*E. c. chrysolophus*) and Royal Penguin (*E. c. schlegeli*). Dr. Falla, who studied the Royal Penguins on Macquarie Island, kindly informed me of additional differences between the two subspecies concerned. The Royal Penguin,





[F. C. Kinsky

Plate XXXIV — A pair of Royal Penguins (*Eudyptes c. schlegeli*), Penguin Bay, Campbell Island, 19 January, 1968. The left bird, considered to be a male, is close to the usual colouring of this subspecies, whereas the right hand bird, considered to be a female, has silvergrey cheeks and throat. Allowing for the size differences between sexes, note the strikingly large bills of this subspecies.

breeding on Macquarie Island only, usually has white cheeks, chin and throat, and a strikingly large bill (usually stronger in males than in females). Some individuals on Macquarie Island, however, have either *silver grey* or *jet black* cheeks, chin and throat, though they have the typically large bills of this race. Macaroni Penguins, in general very similar to dark-chinned Royals, can be separated from Royals by their distinctly *grey-black* cheeks, chins and throats, and by their comparatively (allowing for size variation with sex) smaller bills.

#### FAMILY PROCELLARIIDAE (Petrels)

##### Snares Cape Pigeon (*Daption capensis australis*)

Both Westerskov (1960) and Bailey and Sorensen (1962) comment on the abundance of Cape Pigeons around Campbell Island, including Perseverance Harbour, and on the fact that although present throughout the year, nesting on Campbell Island or outlying stacks had not been observed. Westerskov (1960) refers to this species as an "uncommon migratory breeding bird," and Bailey and Sorensen (1962) quote G. Thompson, the Officer-in-Charge during the time of Bailey's visit to Campbell Island, who reported having found a Cape Pigeon "on nest high on rocky cliffs on the south coast below Mt. Dumas on 27th October, 1957."

G. Surrey, a very keen bird observer, saw five birds "breeding" on inaccessible cliffs on the east side of Mt. Eboule Peninsula, above Monument Harbour (on the south coast of Campbell Island) on 14 December, 1967. This therefore is a second colony of Cape Pigeons on the main island.

##### White-headed Petrel (*Pterodroma lessoni*)

Bailey and Sorensen (1962) include the White-headed Petrel in the list of Campbell Island birds on the basis of one specimen collected in Perseverance Harbour on 2 March, 1957. However, this species was not included in Westerskov's (1960) list.

Two further specimens of this species have been recorded recently from Campbell Island. An injured bird was picked up in front of the hostel on 23 March, 1960, and a second bird was found dead near the meteorological station on 6 June, 1968. The latter specimen was subsequently forwarded to the Dominion Museum for identification, and is preserved as a skeleton (DM 14614).

##### Fairy Prion (*Pachyptila turtur*)

No substantiated records of Fairy Prions having been collected on Campbell Island were in existence until very recently. This species was not included in Bailey and Sorensen's (1962) list. However, Westerskov (1960) quotes Filhol as mentioning sightings of Fairy Prions at sea when approaching Campbell Island in 1874, but points out that the birds seen by Filhol were more likely to have been "some of the other prions recorded (*desolata* or *belcheri*)."

Nevertheless, Westerskov does not discard the possibility of Fairy Prions possibly being carried to Campbell Island by strong northerly winds but points out that confirmation was still needed.

The occurrence of Fairy Prions on Campbell Island has recently been confirmed. Three specimens were picked up on the island on

16 February, 1963, 16 May, 1968, and 17 February, 1969, respectively. All three specimens were forwarded to the Dominion Museum for identification and are preserved as study skins (DM 10060, 13518 and 14601).

#### FAMILY HYDROBATIDAE (Storm Petrels)

##### Grey-backed Storm Petrel (*Garrodia nereis*)

Westerskov (1960) did not include this species in his list, but it was listed by Bailey and Sorensen (1962) in considerable detail. Grey-backed Storm Petrels were not known from Campbell Island until 1957, when the first of this species was collected on 3 March, after having hit a station window during the previous night. Since then this small storm petrel has been observed regularly and in seemingly increasing numbers.

During the last eight years a total of 85 Grey-backed Storm Petrels were caught around the hostel during foggy or stormy nights. These birds were banded and released in Perseverance Harbour, but no recoveries were reported up to the present time. They occur on Campbell Island throughout the year but seem to be much more plentiful during late summer than at any other time of the year.

Breeding of this species on the island has not yet been proved. However, the monthly distribution of the birds caught is much more likely to indicate that breeding occurs in the area, than that it reflects the number and distribution of foggy nights occurring on Campbell Island throughout the year. Out of 59 birds caught, banded and released during a three year period (1966-1968) 37 were caught between February and April, i.e. the latter part of the breeding season, whereas the remaining 22 birds caught were distributed between May and January. The majority of birds therefore were caught during the time when adult birds are feeding chicks, and young birds are becoming fledged and are leaving their burrows. It is therefore very possible that Grey-backed Storm Petrels now either breed on Campbell Island proper, or on some of its offshore stacks.

##### Black-bellied Storm Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*)

The inclusion of this species in both Westerskov's (1960) and Bailey and Sorensen's (1962) lists is based on W. R. B. Oliver's observation of one bird at sea off Campbell Island on 1 April, 1927.

Since then two specimens were collected on Campbell Island proper. The first was found dead on 18 May, 1960, and the second, an adult male, was found on 16 April, 1968, outside the hostel, after having struck the building during the previous night. Both specimens were forwarded to the Dominion Museum for identification, where they are preserved as a spirit specimen (DM 10321) and as a study skin (DM 13517) respectively.

##### Wilson's Storm Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*)

The first Wilson's Storm Petrel ever recorded from Campbell Island was seen and reported by D. Paull in 1967. The first time the bird was seen was on 5 February, 1967, when it was observed close inshore in Garden Cove at the head of Perseverance Harbour. A second sighting of possibly the same bird was made on 22 March, 1967, just inside the Perseverance Harbour entrance.

The excellent description of the bird observed (size as for Grey-backed Storm Petrel, nearly completely black, with prominent white rump and brown area on upper wing) eliminated any possible error in its identification, even though the colour of the bird's webs was not noticed at the time.

#### FAMILY SULIDAE (Gannets)

##### Australian Gannet (*Sula bassana serrator*)

The southern-most sightings of Gannets in New Zealand up until 1967 were made off the Auckland Islands (50°50' South Lat.) in January, 1963 (B. D. Bell, pers. com.). On 20 December, 1967, a Gannet was observed in Perseverance Harbour, Campbell Island (52°33' South Lat.), which stayed within the harbour for nearly a week and was seen daily, cruising around and diving for food. The bird was seen again by the writer just outside the entrance to Perseverance Harbour on 2 January, 1968. These sightings now constitute the most southerly observations of Gannets within the New Zealand region.

#### FAMILY PHALACROCORACIDAE (Shags)

##### Little Shag (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* ssp.)

Westerskov (1960) does not include this species in his Campbell Island list. However, Bailey and Sorensen (1962) included the species and mentioned five different occasions between June and October, 1958, on which shags of this species were allegedly observed on Perseverance Harbour. Also included in this list is an account submitted by G. Poppleton, leader of the Campbell Island meteorological party in 1959, describing a group of shags observed on Perseverance Harbour on 13 July, 1959. From the features given in this account, however, it is quite evident that the shags described were not *P. melanoleucos*.

During a routine visit to the Giant Petrel breeding colonies near Six Foot Lake on 4 November, 1966, D. Paull observed two shags on the lake, which he described as being smaller than the Campbell Island shag, well known to him at the time, and being black above and white below, including the under neck and the face. These were later identified as Little Shags from excellent photographs supplied by the observer. Both these shags were seen regularly on the lake throughout 1967, and a nest containing two eggs was found on 20 September of the same year. This nest, built of small twigs and lined with tussock grass, was found on a large branch of *Dracophyllum* overhanging the water, at about 4 feet above the surface of the lake and near its north western corner. On 4 November, 1967, three non-flying chicks were seen swimming in the vicinity of the then empty nest. As these chicks were never seen again it can be assumed that they fell prey to Giant Petrels, which frequent the lake in fairly large numbers, or to marauding Skuas.

A second clutch of four eggs was laid by the same pair of shags in the same nest immediately following the loss of the chicks, and during a visit to the lake on 4 December, 1967, one of the adult birds was flushed from the nest revealing four small naked chicks about two to three days old. However, the nest was found empty again on 1 January, 1968, and one chick, about three weeks old, was found dead, floating on the surface of the lake in the vicinity of the nest.





[D. Paull

Plate XXXV — Little Shag (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* ssp.) on nest in *Dracophyllum cockayneanum*. Six Foot Lake, Campbell Island, October, 1967.

On 8 January, 1968, Six Foot Lake was visited by the writer, and the pair of adult shags was observed swimming on the lake. The nest on that day was found to contain one fresh egg, the first egg of this pair's third clutch for this season. On 28 January, 1968, one of the adult birds was found incubating a full clutch of five eggs and on 18 February five chicks, now between one and two weeks old, were occupying the nest. The area was again visited on 24 February and on 17 March when all five chicks were still present. During the latter visit, three of the chicks had reached flying stage, whereas the two youngest chicks were still in the nest, although to all appearances fully fledged.

On 1 April, 1968, the adult pair and three immature birds were observed together on the lake. The young birds at that stage were described as being black above, with undersides white, but strongly smudged with black. At the same time the nest was found to contain two fresh eggs, which during later visits in April were found being incubated by one or the other of the adult pair. During the first week in May, the nest was found abandoned, but still containing two, now cold, eggs.

In New Zealand, Little Shags (*P. melanoleucos brevirostris*) are normally considered to be single-brooded, although some pairs will without doubt lay a second clutch following the loss of their first clutch (E. Saul, pers. com.). However, the Six Foot Lake pair produced four clutches of eggs in the same nest during the one



breeding season, and the fourth clutch was laid following the successful rearing of at least three chicks. The four clutches contained three, four, five and two eggs respectively and chicks were hatched from all eggs (12) of the first, second and third clutches, and at least three chicks were successfully reared from the third clutch.

During the Canterbury University expedition to Campbell and Antipodes Islands (January and February, 1969), B. D. Bell visited Six Foot Lake on 21 January, 1969, and found four adult Little Shags (all of the pied phase) present on the lake. He also found two nests in the same area of *Dracophyllum* scrub at the north western end of the lake, where the one pair of shags had nested during the 1967/68 breeding season. Both nests were occupied and at the time of his visit contained two and five eggs respectively. Two adult pairs therefore were breeding on Six Foot Lake during the 1968/69 breeding season, whereas only one pair was present the year before. From this it can be assumed that either a second pair of this species had reached Campbell Island some time during 1968, or, that two chicks of the 1967/68 season had formed a pair and were breeding already when not fully one year old. This, however, is not very likely.

The origin and taxonomic status of the Campbell Island Little Shags is difficult to state. They could have been blown south from New Zealand and, if this is the case, would belong to the pied phase of *P. melanoleucos brevirostris*. However, as both adult birds were of the pied phase, and their progeny showed strong signs of being pied also, it can just as well be argued that the original pair was blown over to Campbell Island from Southeast Australia or from Tasmania. They would therefore belong to the nominate subspecies, *P. m. melanoleucos*, called in Australia the Little Pied Shag. The latter assumption is the more likely, as true pied birds are relatively uncommon in the New Zealand population. Pied birds are fairly plentiful only in Northland, where the proportion of true pied and the white-throated phases is estimated to be about one to three or four (Falla *et al.*, 1966).

#### FAMILY SCOLOPACIDAE (Curlew, Snipe & Sandpipers) Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

A Turnstone was observed in Tucker Cove (Perseverance Harbour) first on 15 November, 1967, and later was seen repeatedly at irregular intervals near the head of the harbour and in the vicinity of the camp up to 2 January, 1968.

This bird, unknown to any member of the station staff, was identified by the writer from an excellent colour slide made by A. Bromley.

#### FAMILY STERCORARIIDAE (Skuas) Antarctic Skua (*Stercorarius skua maccormicki*)

An Antarctic Skua was seen near Beeman Camp on 20 February, 1968, and it stayed on Campbell Island for at least nine days. The bird had a U.S.A.R.P. (United States Antarctic Research Program) band on its right tarsus. Efforts were made to either trap the bird or at least to read the band number with binoculars. However, the bird was shy and did not allow close approach, neither did it enter the trap. It is most probable that the bird was originally banded in the Ross Sea area, but could of course have been banded on one of the Antarctic Peninsula research stations.

## FAMILY STERNIDAE (Terns)

Antarctic Tern (*Sterna vittata*) and Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Antarctic Terns were fairly plentiful on Campbell Island during the 1967/68 summer, when the writer counted at least 22 adult pairs in Perseverance Harbour alone. During his stay five nests containing eggs were found, including one nest at the very summit of Beeman Hill.

The writer was also fortunate in seeing several immature birds of this species in the rather confusing plumage they acquire early during the second year. Antarctic Terns acquire full adult plumage, as do northern hemisphere terns of comparative size, either late during their second year, or possibly not till their third year. Juveniles, when ready to fly, are very different in colour from adult birds. They are heavily mottled and barred with black and brown on their back and upper wing coverts and they have strong buff colouring on their neck and upper breast and a dark streaked cap. Their tail is short and streaked with black and buff at the tips of the rectrices and the outer webs of the outermost three pairs of tail feathers are dark grey. Their bills at that stage are blackish brown and their tarsi and feet are dark brown.

During the post-juvenile moult, occurring shortly after reaching the flying stage, the heavily barred feathers on the back are replaced by uniformly grey feathers (the barred upper wing coverts being retained), the underparts change to pure white and the forehead and crown turn white, leaving only a black patch in front of the eye and a heavy black line leading back from each eye to converge into a large black area on the nape. The bill remains black. This colour phase is reached by some birds already in April, whereas others still have streaked backs as late as June of the same year.

During the first full moult, which takes place in December and January, the immature birds change into a plumage very similar to adult birds, except for the colouring of the head, underside and soft parts, and for the length of the tail, which remains somewhat shorter than those of adult birds. The head remains very similar to the colouring acquired during the post-juvenile moult (as described above), the back and upper wing coverts change to a uniform light grey, but the undersides remain white. The bill at this stage is very dark reddish brown (appearing nearly black in the field) and the tarsi and feet are of a similar colour.

The above observations on juvenile and immature plumages are based on a series of specimens in the Dominion Museum.

Arctic Terns have never been collected on Campbell Island, but several sight-records have been reported (Guthrie-Smith, 1936: 220; Westerskov, 1960: 73-74; Bailey and Sorensen, 1962: 279). Considering the similarity in plumage colour between immature Antarctic Terns and Arctic Terns in winter plumage, and considering the descriptions of the birds concerned as given in the above publications, it could be that most, or possibly all, of the so called "Arctic Terns in winter plumage" seen on Campbell Island, were in fact Antarctic Terns in immature (second summer) plumage.

## FAMILY ALAUDIDAE (Larks)

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Skylarks have never been reported from Campbell Island. On 28 August, 1968, G. Surrey, while trapping Redpolls in the vicinity of the jetty near Beeman Camp for banding purposes, caught a bird which he was unable to identify, and therefore forwarded to the Dominion Museum. The bird concerned was a Skylark, an adult female. It is now a study skin in the museum's collections (DM 13521).

Following its identification, two members of the meteorological staff remembered having heard what they considered at the time to be Skylarks singing but, as this species had not been reported from Campbell Island previously, they were reluctant to report this species from song alone. D. Paull had heard Skylarks singing, without being able to sight the bird(s), several times whilst working in the area of St. Cole Peak during the 1966/67 summer period. A. Bromley reported having heard skylark song fairly regularly around the Beeman Camp area, in the vicinity of St. Cole Peak and on the grassy slopes south of Filhol Peak during the 1967/68 summer.

Skylarks, therefore, must have reached Campbell Island some time before or during 1966 and have since managed to establish themselves.

## FAMILY PLOCEIDAE (Sparrows and Weavers)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Bailey and Sorensen (1962) do not include the House Sparrow in their list of Campbell Island birds, but Westerskov (1960) mentions that "sparrows" were reported from Campbell Island previously and assumes that these reports applied to Hedge Sparrows. Although he considers it quite likely that House Sparrows could have at some time or other reached Campbell Island, they had up till then failed to establish themselves. He also considers that Campbell Island provided no suitable habitat for House Sparrows and states that it was most doubtful that they would ever be able to establish themselves there.

The first reliable record of House Sparrows seen on Campbell Island came from A. Wright, who reported having seen a male bird in January, 1963, close to Beeman Camp.

The next report was received from C. Clark in February, 1965, i.e. two years after A. Wright's report. C. Clark reported in a letter as follows, "This time there is absolutely no confusion. We have a small flock of about 9 House Sparrows, which travel between the fowl run and the spot on the shore where kitchen scraps are dumped. We could capture one as a specimen if necessary."

During the writer's visit to Campbell Island in January, 1968, House Sparrows were observed in the vicinity of Beeman Camp almost daily and three sparrow nests were found. On 4 January one pair was observed collecting nesting material and evidently completing a nest situated in a *Dracophyllum* bush in a small area of mixed scrub close to the main hostel. Another pair was feeding three small chicks in a nest about 30-40 yards distant in the same area of mixed scrub, and also built in a *Dracophyllum* bush not more than five feet from the ground. A third nest was found in Camp



Cove, approximately half a mile distant, on 19 January, 1968, once again built in an overhanging *Dracophyllum* bush about 10 feet above the water. This nest was unoccupied at the time, but contained a fresh layer of chicken feathers, evidently collected from the fowl run close to the camp proper.

House Sparrows therefore have now managed to establish themselves on Campbell Island and further observations will show if they increase in numbers and spread to other areas of the island.

#### REFERENCES

- BAILEY, A. M., and SORESEN, J. H., 1962: *Subantarctic Campbell Island*, Proceedings No. 10, Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, Colorado. (Also issued by A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington.)
- FALLA, R. A., SIBSON, R. B., TURBOTT, E. G., 1966: *A Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*, Collins, London.
- GUTHRIE-SMITH, H., 1936: *Sorrows and Joys of a New Zealand Naturalist*, A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington.
- HATHERTON, T., DAWSON, E. W., KINSKY, F. C., 1965: Balleny Islands Reconnaissance Expedition, *N.Z. Journ. Geology and Geophysics*, 8: 164-179.
- WARHAM, J., 1969: A preliminary Report on the Snares Island Expedition 1968/69, *Antarctic*, 5: 283-285.
- WESTERSKOV, K., 1960: *Birds of Campbell Island*, Department of Internal Affairs, Wildlife Publication, No. 61, Government Printer, Wellington, N.Z.



## SHORT NOTE

### HOOKGRASS CAPTURES HEDGE SPARROWS

Merilees' (1969) report of five Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) being captured by hookgrass (*Uncinia* spp.) has prompted me to record the following observation on a Hedge Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*).

A Hedge Sparrow was found fluttering in some hookgrass beside the Torrent Bay Track in Abel Tasman National Park on 9/1/64. Examination of the bird showed that some black, near-mature hookgrass seedheads had become attached to the primary, secondary and covert feathers on the undersurface of the right wing. Although the bird was still active when found, it had little chance of escape as I had difficulty in freeing it. This caused the removal of several feathers but it was able to fly when released.

Although I have tramped many miles of bush track throughout New Zealand I have not seen a similar occurrence. In one year the following birds were handled in a mixed Podocarp/Broadleaf Forest near Wellington: Chaffinch 32, Fantail 38, Hedge Sparrow 20, Rifleman 11, Pied Tit 51, Grey Warbler 58, Silvereye 463, Shining Cuckoo 2, House Sparrow 1, Whitehead 25, Bellbird 75, Song Thrush 30, Blackbird 84, Tui 15, Morepork 21, Pigeon 3. Although hookgrass was plentiful in this forest none of its seeds was seen on any of these birds.

These observations suggest that birds are rarely trapped and killed by hookgrass but such a novel form of mortality seems worth recording. I am indebted to A. H. Whitaker of Animal Ecology Division, D.S.I.R., for the above figures.

#### REFERENCE

- MERILEES, WILLIAM, 1969: Hook Grass Kills Silvereyes. *Notornis* 16, 2, 144-145:

— JIM HILTON