and pushed her along. He jumped back three feet. A minute later she walked back alongside him. At 13.40 he was facing me and she was facing away, but both were watching me. He jumped around, called " key-key " and pushed her. She turned and pushed back with her head down pushing with the top of her beak under his slightly spread wing against his flank. He mounted and after a few weak flaps dismounted within 15 seconds. 15 seconds later he was mounted again, flapping vigorously. Sometimes her head would snake upwards (the twist sideways would help her watch him) and his head down as if he were trying to grasp her beak and feed her. In half a minute he was off, standing a foot from her. She had a big stretch. At 13.45 he " key-key-ed " alongside her and flew 50 yards to the same perch as before. She immediately followed. I went after them but could not find them. At 14.20 a Kaka called across a gully 300 yards away.

— J. R. JACKSON

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A MIXED GATHERING OF SEABIRDS IN THE TASMAN SEA

On 14/3/71, M.V. Karepo, whilst on a voyage from Tauranga to Melbourne, crossed an intrusion of warmer water in the central Tasman Sea. The following sea temperatures and positions are relevant:—

0800 36.38 South 159.38 East Wind SE 15 Knots Air 71° Sea 72°
1000 36.43 South 159.12 East Wind SE 09 Knots Air 72° Sea 75°
1200 36.48 South 158.43 East Wind SE 09 Knots Air 72° Sea 75°
1400 36.55 South 158.18 East Wind NE 09 Knots Air 75° Sea 72°

The position recorded for 1200 hrs. is some 317 miles south of Lord Howe Island and 800 miles west of the Auckland Isthmus.

The numbers of birds in sight increased rapidly from 0830 and remained at peak throughout the morning, decreasing just as rapidly after 1230. There were very few birds about for the rest of the day.

The following species were seen:—

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans.* Very few about, especially considering that this was found to be one of the best areas when I was keeping records for J. D. Gibson. There were four present at 0800 after which no more were seen until 1200 when three were recorded. No young (brown-backed) or old (white-winged) birds were seen. All birds recorded were either showing or just past the stage of showing the white roundel on a dark wing (v. Gibson, Notornis 14: 56).

Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera.* Rafts of 11, 8, 4 and 3 were put up on being approached by the ship, and others were in sight throughout the morning. Not fewer than 150 birds were seen. However, some of these were probably counted twice if they stayed with the ship any length of time.

About 10% of these birds seemed to have very light underwings, much lighter in colour than the rest of the birds seen. That they were *macroptera* cannot be doubted, as their grey faces and relatively short bills were seen well. I have never seen such light underwings on or about the breeding islands of New Zealand.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis.* The most common bird seen, there were at least 250 recorded during the period. As

is usual very few were seen on their own. They were mostly in twos or threes. There was none of the high acrobatic flight one associates with these petrels, and very little chasing and calling. From the number of times they were seen to land on the surface, feeding must have been the main concern.

One is tempted to think that this is the feeding ground of the Three Kings Blackwings as it would explain why they are rarely seen about the New Zealand coast and only in small numbers to the north of the Three Kings.

Pterodroma ? leucoptera. Amongst the Black-winged Petrels there were noticed birds with a lighter coloured upper surface, being lighter grey than the brownish-grey of the Blackwings. There was an indistinct darker pattern resembling an M across the wings and back. The underwing was white with a narrow dark margin and none of the black line across the axillaries as in the Blackwing. In size the birds appeared about the same. I took these twenty or so birds to be Gould's Petrels, or an allied subspecies.

Pterodroma ? neglecta. One bird which could have been of this species. In size between Blackwing and Grey-faced, of a rich chocolate colour all over except for lighter patches on the underwing between the elbows and the wingtip, and some light feathering about the front of the head. Had I been near the Kermadec Islands I should have had no hesitation in identifying the bird as a dark-phased Kermadec Petrel. But in this latitude ?.

Pterodroma ? rostrata. Six birds seen — about the size of Black-winged, but appeared fatter or fluffier and not so energetic in their flight. The upper surfaces were dark brown, but definitely brown, not black. The head and neck were of the same colour but this changed abruptly to white at the upper belly, about in line with the fore-edge of the wing. The white continued onto the undertail coverts, but the tail feathers were dark brown as on the upper surfaces. The tail was fairly long and at times appeared round. The underwing was wholly dark, almost as dark as the upperwing surfaces. Field notes taken at the time of observation do not record any white on the chin. Since the birds were not seen very closely this white may or may not have been present.

I at first thought that these birds could have been Tahiti Petrels. However, it has been pointed out to me that *rostrata* is larger than Blackwinged and that without the chin being shown to be definitely dark, the possibility of the birds being *P. alba* cannot be ruled out. These birds, therefore, and the two mentioned below, must remain unidentified.

Two other birds with the same shape, size, and flight pattern were seen, but these birds had no visible white on them at all, being of the same brown colour overall.

Storm Petrel ? *Fregetta grallaria.* One storm petrel with very black head and neck, white underwing and belly and black back — not seen well enough to distinguish between White-bellied and Black-bellied.

Blue Noddy *Procelsterna albivitta.* Two birds seen at a distance of about 30 feet. After many years of seeing these noddies in the Pacific Islands, I had no hesitation in identifying these two birds, though I must admit to being mystified at finding them here. Blue Noddies are usually seen close to land.

Gannet *Sula serrator*. One lifted off the water on being approached. It was a young bird, very brown on the upper surface. It circled the ship once and then flew off strongly on a course of abount 260°, i.e. towards south-eastern Australia.

During the return passage to N.Z. " Karepo " crossed the above longitude at latitude 40° South on 30/3/71. The sea temperature remained constant throughout the day at 67° F. and very few birds were seen. I should like to thank Mr. R. B. Sibson, Mr. F. C. Kinsky and Dr. W. R. P. Bourne for reading this note and commenting upon some of the identifications made originally.

— JOHN JENKINS

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LETTER

Sir,

Pacific sight-records of Great Shearwaters

I apologise for reverting to an increasingly stale issue, but I have only just noticed that Captain John Jenkins has repeated his claim to have recorded the Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* in the south-west Pacific. It may therefore be useful to state why these records would not be considered acceptable in the North Atlantic where they would be considerably less unusual. If the bird was as rare in North America as it is in New Zealand, the record would not be accepted there until a specimen had been collected. It might be accepted on the strength of a sight record in Europe, or at least in Britain and Ireland, if all details agreed with the species claimed and there was little possibility of any confusion with any other species; but the original description published by Captain Jenkins does not agree with that of the Great Shearwater in all respects. The tail of a Great Shearwater is not long for a member of that group, only averaging about 117 mm. in fact, and it is brown below, not whitish as reported by Captain Jenkins. The white band across the rump above certainly varies in conspicuousness, but it is exceptional for it to be absent, and it certainly would not be expected in several birds, the only ones seen in a new area; discussion at this end of the world usually concentrates on the fact that Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* may also have white on the rump, rather than that the Great Shearwater may have it dark. The Great Shearwater also has a more or less dark underwing, not a white one with a narrow dark line fore and aft as reported by Captain Jenkins, and while the dark patch on the belly of the Great Shearwater is remarkably seldom noticed, it is surprising that Captain Jenkins did not notice this distinctive feature if he was able to see the colour of the under tail and under wing coverts.

Personally, I am surprised that the Great Shearwater does not appear to have been recorded yet in Australasia, especially when other rather less likely species such as Cory's Shearwater and the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus p. puffinus* have occurred there; and I agree completely with Captain Jenkins that it might turn up on a beach there some day; but its occurrence there does not seem fully proven yet.

Zoology Dept., — W. R. P. BOURNE
Tillydrone Av.,
Aberdeen, Scotland.