

Both sexes incubated. Changeovers occurred at intervals of fifteen to twenty-five minutes, and followed a regular pattern even from an early stage of incubation. The sitting bird left the nest silently and flew a short distance away whereupon it preened vigorously. It then fed silently, high in the canopy, within a seventy-five metre radius of the nest. The feeding bird when returning to the nest began calling twenty metres away, a signal prompting the sitting bird to leave. The relieving Fantail settled quickly on the eggs.

Fantails in the area were noted to associate with other feeding birds, particularly the Chatham Island Warbler (*Gerygone albofrontata*) and the Silveryeye. Fantails were attendant on foraging warblers, feeding on insects they disturbed. On one occasion a Fantail was watched feeding vigorously under two Song Thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*) which were fighting in a *Pseudopanax chathamica*. Also Silveryeye family parties and Fantails were noted moving through the bush canopy, feeding as a group.

A different pair of Fantails with a single flying chick was watched feeding close to the ground. On the approach of an observer the juvenile and one adult moved up into the canopy while the other adult scolded noisily. Unlike the incubating pair this party called constantly as they fed.

Observations ceased on 25 January, so that the full nesting period of the Fantail could not be followed.

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### SWALLOWS AT SEA

During a voyage from the Ile des Pins, New Caledonia, to Whangarei between 2 May and 11 May 1978 on the yacht *Derwent*, several Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) were seen flitting round the boat when we were still some distance from the nearest land (Fig. 1). The birds were noted between Norfolk Island and the Northland coast well to the west of the area where John Jenkins has logged this species at sea.

My observations were as follows:

7 May, 1730 hrs, 31°38'S 168°35'E. Bird seemed to come in from the north-east, flew close to the boat, then flew off to the north-west.

8 May, 1530 hrs, 31°34'S 168°19'E. This bird appeared suddenly, attempted to land on the life lines round the boat, but did not seem to like so unstable a perch. It flew off to the west.

9 May, 1630 hrs, 33°08'S 170°02'E. A swallow appeared suddenly, then vanished.

10 May, 0730 hrs, 34°00'S 171°40'E, and 1035 hrs, three miles off West Island, Three Kings. These two birds also appeared suddenly, and I did not see where they headed when they left us.

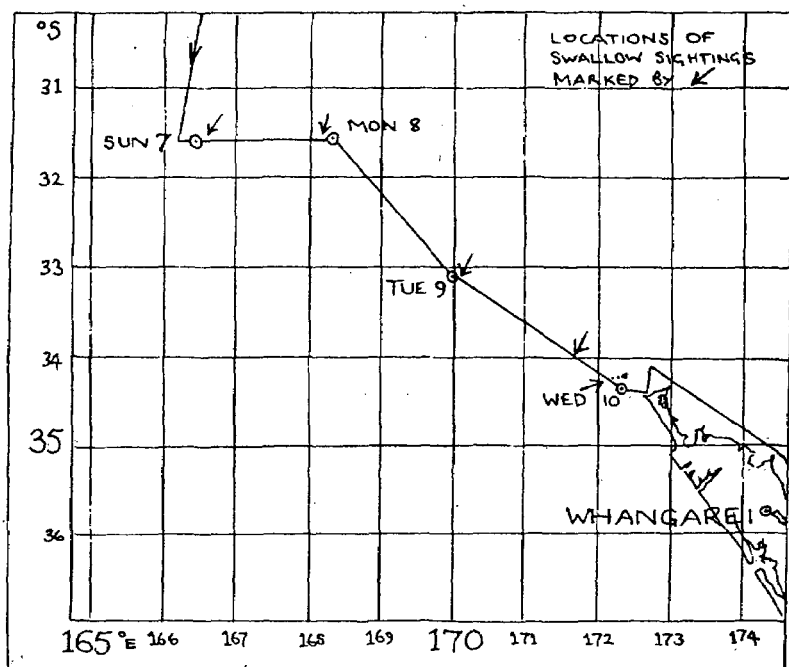


FIGURE 1 — Course of *Derwent* during latter part of voyage New Caledonia to New Zealand, showing locations of swallow sightings.

TIM LOVEGROVE, P.O. Box 56, Waipu, Northland.

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## LETTER

The Editor,  
Sir,

I note the increasing use of the absurd term "breeding strategy" in referring to the breeding biology or breeding behaviour of birds. I do not know where this term originates, but suspect the U.S.A.

Both Webster and the COD define strategy as "generalship, the art of war"; in other words, the planning stage of a military operation; are birds capable of planning, other than perhaps in the selection of a nest site? Tactics, i.e. behaviour or action, begin where strategy ends, in military parlance, and it is in the tactics or behaviour of breeding birds that we are interested. So please let us have decent English in our journal, and no jargon.

A. BLACKBURN

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