

Rand's measurements of the width of the culmen of *lugens* and *brevirostris*, 5 m.m. and 7 m.m. respectively, seem unusually small and are difficult to understand. Unfortunately, he has omitted one measurement which might be significant, namely, that of the width of the culmen of *mollis*, both normal and suspected dark phase. However, this measurement for two specimens of *mollis* from Marion is given by Serventy (1) as 11.5 and 11.6 m.m. Somewhat anomalously, Murphy (4) while including *brevirostris* and *inexpectata*, omits *mollis* from his paper on the "Larger Petrels of the genus *Pterodroma*." From a study of the measurements it would seem that the skulls of *mollis* and *inexpectata* are strongly alike, while that of *brevirostris* is diagnostically slender. Skulls of *brevirostris* and *inexpectata* which we have examined, are quite distinct and easily separable.

There are good grounds for believing that the specimens of *brevirostris* recently recovered from the Auckland west coast came from Marion or adjacent islands. The measurements of our eight birds, the width of the bill being excepted, agree closely with Rand's measurements of Marion *brevirostris*; and his statement that "the nostrils are raised, bulbous and have a visible septum" fits such of our specimens as have these features intact. According to Mathews and Rand, *lugens* of Kerguelen has a smaller bill, with the nostrils flattened, partly closed and the septum hidden. Other significant evidence is that when these so-called Kerguelen petrels were wrecked, *P. salvini* which are not known to breed at Kerguelen, but which according to Crawford (1) breed at Marion "literally by the million," were being driven ashore literally in thousands on the west coast of northern New Zealand.

In the light of recent discoveries, it may well be that Marion should be designated the type-locality of *brevirostris*. Judging from its label, the original specimen came from South African waters which, as petrels fly, are not far from Marion. Later a deceptively similar petrel was found breeding at Kerguelen which was consequently designated the type-locality.

One thing that does emerge from a perusal of the literature of the medium-sized pterodromas of the South Indian Oceans is that their life-histories are comparatively unknown and their taxonomy needs revision.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

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7. Serventy and Whittell, Birds of Western Australia.

WHITE HERON (*Egretta alba*) AT NEW PLYMOUTH.—This bird was first seen at 3.45 p.m. on the afternoon of May 18, 1953. It was originally flying in a westerly direction but when almost directly overhead it changed and flew toward the north-east. It was later reported as having been seen at Pukekura Park. However, seven days later, on 25th May, at 9.55 a.m., it was seen flying south-west at on approximate altitude of 1000 feet. Nevertheless, it was again reported on the following day as having returned to Pukekura Park. The main lake at this tourist centre had been partly drained, leaving a small pond which teemed with carp and goldfish of all sizes. The heron was often seen in the next fortnight feeding on insects and fish which it caught in the mud and shallow water at the verge of the pond. It would allow observers to approach to within ten feet before it took fright and flew a short distance down the pond. It was in the area for about three weeks but when the lake was refilled it left and no further records of its whereabouts were available.—David Medway, New Plymouth.