

critic will provide conservation professionals with much food for thought. For instance, in Craig's opinion the release of juvenile birds into the Stuart Mountains was an expensive exercise doomed to failure as the assumptions on which this location was chosen were untested and ultimately proven incorrect. Lee on the other hand is less trenchant in his appraisal of this move. He agrees with Craig that in hindsight the location was not a wise choice, but points out that the releases did provide valuable experience for subsequent releases of captive-raised birds into the wild.

This book is an essential addition to all New Zealand university, secondary school, and public libraries. I hope it will also be read by people involved with endangered species elsewhere in the world. It presents an honest and balanced review of the successes and failures of takahe research and management. There are many lessons to be learned.

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Review

Onley, D.; Bartle, J.A. 1999 (reprinted 2001). *Identification of seabirds of the Southern Ocean: A guide for scientific observers aboard fishing vessels*

Te Papa Press, Wellington. ISBN 0-909-01047-1
pp. 81, Hardcover, 20 colour plates. \$34.95

First produced in 1999 as a specialist book for the fishing industry, and printed in English, French, Russian, and Spanish formats, *Identification of seabirds of the Southern Ocean* has now been reprinted and is being offered to a wider audience. It was originally intended specifically for observers studying seabird mortality from fishing vessels as part of the international effort to reduce the significant decline in some seabird populations. The guide follows the scheme of International Scientific Observation as set out by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMIR). It focuses on identifying only those seabirds that associate directly with fisheries, especially long line fisheries, in the Antarctic and subantarctic waters of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans beyond 40°S, and covers 36 species.

The guide simplifies the process of seabird identification through a series of well-planned keys which are complemented by colour plates on facing pages and followed by specific descriptions. Derek Onley's drawings clearly illustrate the diagnostic characteristics identified in the text. After measuring the bird using methods shown in Plate 1 the observer keys out the bill (Plates 2 and 3) before being directed to the appropriate group of birds — albatross, shearwater, petrel, skua, or gull. Here further keys, descriptions, and measurements are used to determine the species.

Only those species that can be readily separated by straight-forward identification are given. Thus of the 20 or so species of albatross distinguished by recent research including DNA studies, only 15 are dealt with here. Plates are arranged so that birds of similar appearance, such as flesh-footed shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*, black petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*, and Westland petrel *P. westlandica*, are grouped together. Following the plates is a concise section on the breeding, population distribution, and, in relation to ships and fisheries, the behaviour of each species. It is interesting to learn that during winter, between 1989 and 1997, the grey petrel *Procellaria cinerea* was the most frequently caught seabird on southern bluefin tuna long lines around New Zealand.

The authors have braved the current seabird taxonomic confusion using scientific names taken mostly from Mayr & Cottrell's *Checklist of birds of the world*. Common names are those most widely used internationally, so New Zealand readers will look in vain for "mollymawks", "grey-faced petrel" or "black-backed gull".

Strangely, given that the guide is to be used at sea, it is not a book that will stand up to wet conditions. This is no doubt a result of monetary constraints.

So does this guide have application for other users such as those involved with southern hemisphere

beach patrol schemes, pelagic bird trips or seabird banding operations? The answer is "Yes". It is an ideal manual for pelagic banders as the 36 species covered are the birds they are most likely to attract when ground baiting. The same applies to pelagic bird watchers who, although not measuring birds in the hand, will still find useful the diagnostic bill and plumage characteristics. Within the limitations imposed by the small number of species, many beach patrollers will also find it a useful addition to their seabird library. The informative section on identification problems applies as much to storm-cast birds on the beach as it does to drowned birds on a boat

deck. Particularly useful is the key to identifying young albatross.

Is it too much to hope for that the authors, in the not to distant future, might produce a similar identification guide to all Southern Hemisphere seabirds?

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LITERATURE CITED

Mayr, E.; Cottrell, G.W. (ed.). 1979. *Checklist of birds of the world*. Vol. 1. 2nd. ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Museum of Comparative Zoology.

Review

Atkinson, T. *'St Michael' goes South: a 31-foot motor-sailer in support of the 1972/3 Auckland Islands Scientific Expedition*

Department of Conservation, Wellington. ISBN 0-478-22102-9
pp. 136. \$35.00. Available from the Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington.

The day-to-day story of a scientific expedition generally receives little mention, or is just relegated to a brief opening or concluding outline in a scientific paper. The 1972/3 Auckland Islands Expedition organised by the then Department of Lands and Survey — comprising some 30 research workers with supporting staff — was the most comprehensive of numerous scientific surveys to be carried out in New Zealand's subantarctic during the post-war period.

The Expedition's main vessel was Alex Black's 78-foot MV *Acheron*; however by providing a quick shuttle service for research workers to numerous points on the much-dissected coastline of the islands, the 31-foot *St Michael* was an outstanding factor. The well-known Atkinson family of York Bay, Wellington, offered their voluntary help and their vessel *St Michael*, crewed by 4 family members remained in the Auckland Islands over the expedition's 1st 6 weeks.

The log's daily narrative, in addition to making thoroughly interesting reading, manages to give a clear picture of the activities and research procedures of the expedition, ranging from sea lion studies on Enderby Island to botanical surveys and the night-banding of petrels. The spectacular topography of

the group, the ever-treacherous weather, and vegetation and bird life, all receive due mention. So does the care required in negotiating the rugged coastline, although it is sometimes not easy to appreciate the exceptional sea-going skills involved (especially notable when reading the author's description — with accompanying photos — of negotiating the notorious Victoria Passage!).

The book includes 3 of Tudor Atkinson's original sketch plans of inadequately charted or unmapped areas: the Friday Island passage in Port Ross; contours of the southern section of Adams Island (not included in Alan Eden's 1944-5 survey); and the western entrance, Carnley Harbour (including Victoria Passage). The plans were published in the 1975 volume of preliminary expedition results, but are now made generally available.

Much credit is due to the Department of Conservation for providing a publication grant enabling the log to be issued in this form. Even though delayed for some 30 years, the book is a most welcome addition to Auckland Islands literature.

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