

Observers of shorebirds at other Kaipara sites did not record small terns on the day of our count. For several years the Wildlife Service has been trying to protect the nests of Fairy Terns, and the presence of immature birds among this flock may be an encouraging sign.

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### Cattle Egrets near Antarctica in April

On 24 April 1985, during the voyage of SRV *Totorore* from the Antarctic Peninsula to Punta Arenas, Chile, two Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) were seen in 61°23'S, 63°39'W, flying north.

One bird tried to land on board but fell into the water. After about a minute it managed to take off again and make a successful landing. It was emaciated and weak and, although it was kept warm and force fed with sardines and oil, it died after two days. The specimen is now at the Instituto de la Patagonia. It had dark legs with yellowish on the rear of the tibiae, and it had a tinge of buff on the crown.

Measurements were: length 480 mm, bill 53.9, gape 74.7, wing 258, tail 93, tarsus 84, mid-toe 81.

The birds were seen after a northeasterly gale with snow and sleet, sea temperature 1.4 °C, air -1 °C. By this date the Bransfield Strait was already blocked by pack ice, and so if the egrets had been in the South Shetland Islands or on the Antarctic Peninsula, as seems likely, they had left their departure for the north very late.

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This record refers to the African subspecies *B. i. ibis*, which now breeds and migrates widely in South America, not the Indian subspecies *B. i. coromandus* that occurs in New Zealand and Australia. See similar records in *Distribution of Cattle Egrets to the Falkland Islands*, I. J. Strange, *Le Gerfaut* 1979 — Ed.



### A probable record of Audubon's Shearwater from Rarotonga

On 14 October 1983, at about 5 a.m., while waiting to leave Rarotonga by air, I watched a shearwater in the loading lights adjacent to the aircraft for about 30 minutes. The bird appeared suddenly in the zone of very bright light produced by the loading lights (one situated high up on a standard) and circled repeatedly in the general area over and in front of the aircraft, rather than being attracted to the actual lights. Its flight was sometimes quite close to the ground, and it was undeterred by the considerable activity all around the aircraft. It disappeared and reappeared out of the dark, and I watched at least five appearances.

Visibility was good as the bird was so close and in such strong light. The weather was fine and clear. Features noted were its typical shearwater shape, its comparatively small size and its stiff shearwater flight with alternating flapping, gliding and banking. Field marks: gleaming white (flashing in lights) underparts, black (or possibly brownish black) upperparts, black semicollar coming slightly down sides of neck (but not as prominently as the Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*), and white underwings. Unfortunately the colour