

Australia Range regions except for one in the 1950s of the bird arriving to breed at Ayr in March-April each year. Occasional records from remote places show that the Painted Snipe can move far. This and its apparently erratic appearances, common in some years, scarce or absent in others, led earlier writers to consider it nomadic, e.g. birds at Laverton, May-September 1951, were the first recorded there since 1897. In southern Australia the Painted Snipe was reported to be present only during floods at long intervals, but the *Atlas of Australian Birds* (Blakers *et al.* 1984) and other observations suggest that movements are mainly north in winter and south in summer. Reports imply that the species may even migrate out of Australia, though there is little evidence of overseas populations migrating or of a possible wintering ground for Australian birds. The largest flock reported is of 25 birds near a nesting colony on the Murray River.

Although we have searched for the Painted Snipe on many occasions since 6 August, we have been unsuccessful. Conditions at Lake Ellesmere changed during the rest of August, owing to prolonged and heavy rain, and the area of dry rushes in which we saw the bird was inundated for many weeks. Lake Ellesmere has a vast expanse of suitable marshy terrain and so the chances of finding the bird again were remote.

An interesting report was received on 12 August. A shooter operating in the Wolfe's Road area flushed what he described as a strange bird with a white mark around its body and reddish colour on the plumage from reed beds near where we had seen the Painted Snipe. It disappeared without his being able to gain more information.

On being shown Pizzey's Field Guide, he seemed fairly certain that the Painted Snipe resembled the bird he had flushed. The reference to a reddish colour on the plumage may indicate that a female as well as a male Painted Snipe have been observed. Various sources state that male-female pairs often fly around together.

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Light-mantled Sooty Albatross at Lake Manapouri

At 1100 hours on 2 June 1986, R. T. Johnston, a Fiordland Travel bus driver, saw a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*) on the ground near the vehicle garages at West Arm Power Station, Lake Manapouri. The bird was examined at Te Anau Wildlife Centre and found to be in good health.

On 3 June, after 30 hours' captivity in a tourist bus and car, the albatross was released on Oreti Beach, Invercargill. We yelled encouragement as the bird did a minute's vigorous wing flapping before rising to 8 m in the fresh on-shore breeze. After a brief mobbing by some Black-billed Gulls (*Larus bulleri*) the albatross glided along the dunes towards Bluff Hill.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses are occasionally seen on the Fiordland coast in winter (KM, pers. obs.) and during 28 May-6 June 1986 a few were seen there (L. A. Shaw and P. A. Brotherston, pers. comm.).

A very strong south-west airstream, with winds averaging 35-45 knots, had spread from south of the Tasman Sea on to southern New Zealand during 31 May-1 June 1986 (R. Holloway, Meteorological Service, pers. comm.). The West Arm albatross was c.44 km from Fiordland's open coast. However on 12 June 1980 single Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses were found blown inland at Lumsden and Wendon in Southland, both c.74 km from the nearest open sea (*Notornis* 28: 60).

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King Shags – a correction

Nelson (*Notornis* 18 (1971): 30), purportedly quoting Hutton (*Trans. NZ Inst.* 11 (1878): 332-7), stated that “in 1773, J. R. Forster, naturalist on Cook's second voyage, collected the first King Shags from White Rocks outside Queen Charlotte Sound; he estimated the total population at about 160 birds”. I do not know where Nelson got this erroneous information from for Hutton in the paper referred to said no such things. He said only that “during his voyage with Captain Cook, in 1773, J. R. Forster described a shag, which he said was found in New Zealand and Terra del Fuego, under the name of *Pelecanus carunculatus* . . .” We also now know that Forster did not collect the first specimens from White Rock (which, incidentally, was not known to support a breeding colony until one was discovered there by Henry H. Travers in 1875) and did not anywhere give the stated total population estimate. He is known to have collected only two specimens: the first on 20 May 1773 between Ship Cove and Hippa Island (or on Hippa Island itself) and the second on 6 November 1774 between Ship Cove and Long Island. The first specimen, an adult, was the basis of Forster's description and his son's drawing (Hoare, M. E. (ed.) *The Resolution Journal of Johann Reinhold Forster 1772-1775*, The Hakluyt Society (1982); 283, 681). The only information we have on population size at the time of Forster's visits to Queen Charlotte Sound appeared in a manuscript catalogue in the British Museum (Natural History), compiled under the direction of Forster, where it is said of this species “NZ Charlotte Sound . . . very few in N. Zeland”. This entry clearly formed the basis of Latham's statement that his Carunculated Shag “inhabits New Zealand; found in Queen Charlotte's Sound, though not in plenty” (*A General Synopsis of Birds* 3 (1785): 603).

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