

The Editor,
Sir,

PLUMAGE PHASES OF GIANT PETRELS

There is an error in a recent paper in *Notornis* (Hicks 1973) which should not be left uncorrected.

Referring to the giant petrels *Macronectes halli* and *M. giganteus*, Hicks states (p. 236) that Bourne & Warham (1966) suggested that dark phased individuals represent *M. halli*, and the white phase *M. giganteus*. This is incorrect. Bourne & Warham suggested that, while *M. halli* is monomorphic with only a dark plumage phase, *M. giganteus* is dimorphic with dark and white phases, the white phase representing only up to 15% of local breeding populations of *M. giganteus* and usually a much smaller proportion (Shaughnessy 1971). Dark phased *M. giganteus* become paler with increasing age than does *M. halli*, but to assume that all dark giant petrels seen at sea are *M. halli* leads to a false picture of their distribution.

REFERENCES

- BOURNE, W. R. P.; WARHAM, J. 1966. Geographical variation in the giant petrels of the genus *Macronectes*. *Ardea* 54: 45-67.
- HICKS, G. R. F. 1973. Latitudinal distribution of seabirds between New Zealand and the Ross Sea, December 1970. *Notornis* 20 (3): 231-250.
- SHAUGHNESSY, P. D. 1971. Frequency of the white phase of the southern giant petrel, *Macronectes giganteus* (Gmelin). *Australian Journal of Zoology* 19: 77-83.

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The Editor,
Sir,

A FAREWELL FROM THE SECRETARY

Although it is perhaps not conventional for letters of resignation to be published in *Notornis* I feel that, under the circumstances, members are entitled to some explanation as to why the Secretary should resign after only a year's service.

I have been invited to apply for a lectureship in a new course in Environmental Science in Leicester and although it is by no means certain that I will get the position, it is an opportunity I feel I cannot let pass by.

Both my wife and I have made very many friends throughout the country by virtue of membership of the OSNZ and it is certainly not through any dissatisfaction with New Zealand or its people that