

NOTES ON SOOTY SHEARWATERS AND OTHER AVIFAUNA OF THE CHILEAN OFFSHORE ISLAND OF GUAFO

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ABSTRACT

According to available literature, Isla Guafo, Chile, has been rarely visited by ornithologists. The authors have produced a tentative species list. Birds observed within 1 km of the island are included in the total of 62 species. Breeding information was obtained for some species.

The discovery of a large breeding colony of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) is important because it is the first known large colony in Chile north of the Fuegian area.

INTRODUCTION

The Chilean offshore island of Guafo, centred in 43°36'S 74°43'W, lies in the middle of the seaward approach to the Gulf of Corcovado and is about 39 km south-west of the island of Chiloe. It consists of hills up to 240 m, with valleys, ridges, and steep-sided stream gorges, covered with dense temperate rainforest. It is approximately 15.7 km north to south and 19.4 km east to west (Fig. 1).

High cliffs, more or less vegetated, surround much of the island, but there are some slopes and sand beaches. Most of the coast is rock bound and is unapproachable in normal weather conditions.

The greater part of Isla Guafo is in its virgin state. A small whaling station used to operate in Caleta Samuel, but it closed about 50 years ago and the only conspicuous evidence remaining is the secondary growth over a few hectares around the caleta (small bay) where trees were felled for fuel. A lighthouse at Punta Weather on the top of a high cliffy peninsula is manned by Chilean naval personnel. A small farm is maintained close to the lighthouse with a few cattle, sheep, goats and hens, a dog, and pet rabbits. None of these animals seems inclined to stray into the forest, where generally wet conditions prevail.

The island is visited occasionally by fishermen for shellfish, but only in exceptionally good weather. In the past it was also visited by sea-lion hunters. The lighthouse keepers had been told that wild dogs and wild cats were on the island. We found no evidence of either, except for some cat footprints in thick dust in a cave near a human skeleton, but they could have been very old. Some rats (? species) were seen in the forest near Caleta Samuel,

and mice visited the Expedition's food store. Many burrows in the forest floor indicated the presence of small underground-living animals.

METHODS

The Totorore Expedition, whose team consisted of the four authors, arrived at Isla Guafo on 26 September 1983 and camped there until 20 October 1983. During this time 17 km of the east coast and Punta Weather were examined closely, but the rest of the coast was observed only from close offshore because unfavourable sea conditions prevented our landing. We explored the forest for several kilometres from Caleta Samuel, from near to Punta Norte, and from Punta Weather, but most of the interior remains unexplored.

Day watches and some night watches were kept offshore to observe the movements of seabirds. A watch was kept one night from the lighthouse to observe any birds attracted to the light. Bad weather restricted many of our activities.

The scientific nomenclature used in the list is in accordance with the Lista Patron de las Aves Chilenas by Braulio Araya (1982).

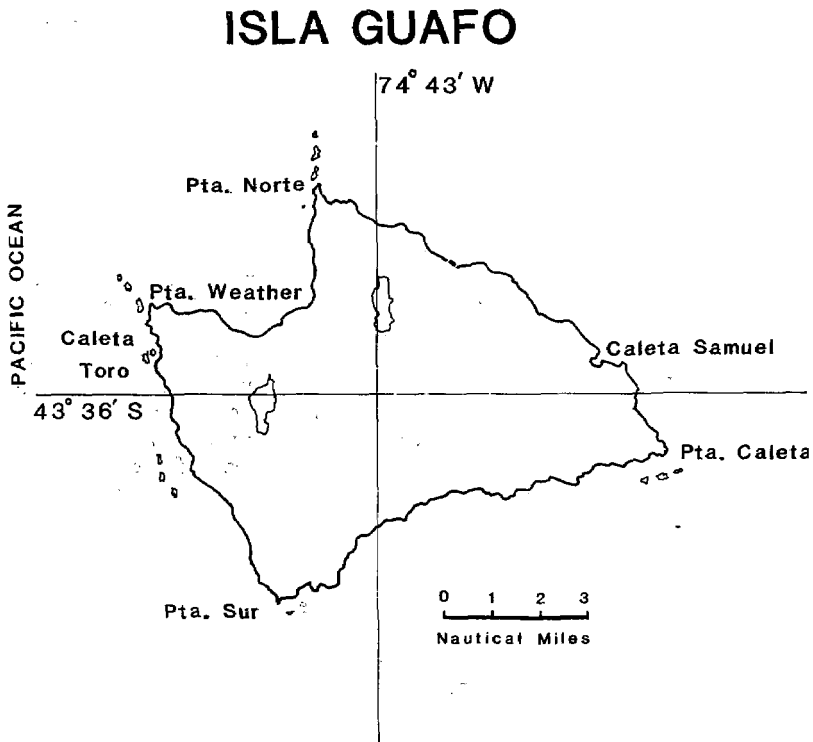


FIGURE 1

ANNOTATED SPECIES ACCOUNT

MAGELLANIC PENGUIN *Spheniscus magellanicus*

Common close offshore. We found a breeding colony of unknown extent in dense scrub near Punta Norte. Of several burrows which we examined on 9 October, some had 2 eggs, and some had 1.

ROYAL ALBATROSS *Diomedea epomophora sanfordi*

Singly, seen frequently offshore, occasionally within 0.5 km of the coast.

BLACK-BROWED MOLLYMAWK *Diomedea melanophrys*

Common offshore, and occasionally into Caleta Samuel; up to 5 at a time. Two-thirds, approximately, were juvenile or immature.

GIANT PETREL *Macronectes* sp.

One or two frequently offshore and flying over coastal rock shelf.

ANTARCTIC FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Common offshore. Several seen on rocky islets near Caleta Toro, close to a colony of Imperial Shags.

CAPE PIGEON *Daption capense*

Occasionally singly offshore.

PRIONS *Pachyptila* sp.

Loose flocks seen frequently offshore. Two dead specimens found floating were identified as Thin-billed Prions (*P. belcheri*). Many remains were found on north-east coast, some identifiable as *P. belcheri*.

WHITE-CHINNED PETREL *Procellaria aequinoctialis*

Common offshore in groups up to 12. One flock of 40 encountered 8 km from island.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

We discovered that Sooty Shearwaters breed on Isla Guafo in large numbers. From observations of birds coming to land in the late evening we estimated that the colony consists of at least 200 000 birds.

Sooty Shearwaters were seen to be gathering within 3 km of the shore from mid-afternoon, sometimes circling about low over the water and sometimes in extensive rafts on the water, in many locations all round the island. Soon after sunset they became very active and gained height, and the first crossed the coast, flying 80-100 m high, about 20 minutes after sunset. They continued to stream in until long after dark, when they could only be heard. The main concentrations of incoming birds were at Caleta Samuel, Punta Weather, and wherever a stream gorge or valley opened to the sea. On 27 September at Caleta Samuel, bird counts gave a rate of 200-300 birds per minute, but by 20 October this number had more than trebled. On 9 October, 700 birds per minute were counted flying inland at Punta Weather.

Over land, the Sooty Shearwaters circled and dispersed towards the higher hills. We tried to locate a main colony, if such exists, by camping in the forest and tracing the movements of the birds by their calls, but we were not successful, and any large colonies are probably further into the vast interior than we could reach in the time available. At each of six camp sites, however, birds were heard crashing through the canopy to the forest floor in small numbers, the most being 15 on a high hill not far from Punta Weather. Nesting birds may therefore be scattered all over the island, and some birds were even heard close above the beach at Caleta Samuel.

In the dense forest with thick and tangled undergrowth it was very difficult to locate either grounded shearwaters or their burrows (cf. Murphy 1936). Most of the burrows found were under the roots of large trees or under huge fallen tree trunks, and few of those found were actually occupied. Three birds which we captured were in fresh plumage and still had fully downy brood patches, from which we concluded that laying had not begun.

WILSON'S STORM PETREL *Oceanites oceanicus*

Common offshore in small numbers.

DIVING PETREL *Pelecanoides* sp.

A few seen close offshore; one dead on the east coast.

OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax olivaceus*

Seen in small numbers around the shore. No nests found.

ROCK SHAG *Phalacrocorax magellanicus*

Common around the island, breeding in scattered colonies on suitable rock ledges or in caves. One colony at Punta Weather had 18 nests, one south-east of Caleta Samuel 14 nests, and one 1 km north-west of Caleta Samuel 22 nests.

IMPERIAL SHAG *Phalacrocorax atriceps*

Very common, breeding in at least six colonies around the island on suitable rocks, on Punta Norte, and on a small headland about 1.5 km north-west of Caleta Samuel. At the last on 16 October there were 75 nests, of which 8 were empty, 7 contained 1 egg, 24 had 2 eggs, 31 had 3 eggs, and 5 were inaccessible.

WHITE-NECKED HERON *Ardea cocoi*

One seen.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

One.

BLACK-NECKED IBIS *Theristicus caudatus*

Groups of 2-9.

KELP GOOSE *Chloephaga hybrida*

Abundant all around the coast. Average of 30 pairs per kilometre of north-east coast. Nests with 4-6 eggs found from 26 September onwards.

ASHY-HEADED GOOSE *Chloephaga poliocephala*

Small numbers around coast. Nesting; goslings seen on 28 September.

FLIGHTLESS STEAMER DUCK *Tachyeres pteneres*

Common on more sheltered parts of north-east coast. No nests found.

SPECKLED TEAL *Anas flavirostris*

Moderate numbers.

CHILOE WIDGEON *Anas sibilatrix*

Uncommon.

TURKEY VULTURE *Cathartes aura*

Common.

CINEREOUS HARRIER *Circus cinereus*

Uncommon.

CHIMANGO CARACARA *Milvago chimango*

Scarce.

CRESTED CARACARA *Polyborus plancus*

Locally common.

PLUMBEOUS RAIL *Rallus sanguinolentus*

Sparse.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus palliatus*

One only, at Caleta Samuel.

MAGELLANIC OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus leucopodus*

Common on rocky shores and beaches. First nests with eggs found on 18 October.

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ater*

Commonest oystercatcher on all coasts. Nests with eggs found on 18 October. Two eggs were laid in a Kelp Goose nest after the first two goose eggs. When we left on 20 October the goose appeared to be incubating.

SOUTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus chilensis*

Common.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

Three only.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Common.

RED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Seen at very close range and easily identified. Often 100-200 in disturbed water around Punta Norte, and a flock of over 5000 was counted between Punta Norte and Caleta Samuel on 20 October.

AMERICAN SHEATHBILL *Chionis alba*

One in attendance at a sea lion colony on Punta Norte.

CHILEAN SKUA *Catharacta chilensis*

A few around the coasts and near Imperial Shag colonies. One seen to stoop on a small bird at sea, thought to be a prion, and carry it to the shore.

DOLPHIN GULL *Leucophaeus scoresbii*

Common near sea lion and Imperial Shag colonies. Breeding colony at Punta Norte with 80 nests. On 9 October some nests contained 1 egg.

SOUTHERN BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus dominicanus*

Common all around the island. Seen to be nesting on offshore rocks and headlands. No nests examined.

BROWN-HOODED GULL *Larus maculipennis*

Few groups, up to 4, north-east coast. All seen were adults in breeding plumage.

SOUTH AMERICAN TERN *Sterna hirundinacea*

Small numbers seen close off south-east coast.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Three arrived in Caleta Samuel on 17 October, and by the next day there were 23, and 1 dead on the shore.

AUSTRAL PARAKEET *Enicognathus ferrugineus*

Locally in small groups.

GREEN-BACKED FIRE-CROWN *Sephanoides galeritus* CommonSTRIPED WOODPECKER *Picoides lignarius* SparseCHILEAN CINCLODES *Cinclodes patagonicus* CommonDES MUR'S WIRETAIL *Sylviorthorhynchus desmursii* Quite commonTHORN-TAILED RAYADITO *Apharastura spinicauda* CommonPLAIN-MANTLED TIT SPINE-TAIL *Leptasthenura aegithalodes* OneWHITE-THROATED TREE-RUNNER *Pygarrhichas albogularis* OneMAGELLANIC BABBLER *Scytalopus magellanicus* CommonFIRE-EYED DIUCON *Pyrope pyrope* CommonBLACK-FACED GROUND TYRANT *Muscesaxicola macloviana*

Locally common

RUFIOUS-BACKED NEGRITO *Lessonia rufa* SparseTUFTED TIT TYRANT *Anairetes parulus* CommonPATAGONIAN TYRANT *Colorhamphus parvirostris* SparseCHILEAN SWALLOW *Tachycineta leucopyga* CommonBLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOW *Notiochelidon cyanoleuca* SparseHOUSE WREN *Troglodytes aedon* SparsePATAGONIAN THRUSH *Turdus falcklandii* CommonAUSTRAL BLACKBIRD *Curaeus curaeus* Common

PATAGONIAN SIERRA FINCH <i>Phrygilus patagonicus</i>	Common
RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW <i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	Common
BEARDED SISKIN <i>Carduelis barbatus</i>	Locally common

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SHORT NOTE

UNUSUAL DISPLAY BY TUI

On 22 June 1984, a pair of Tuís (*Prothemadera novaezeelandiae*) flew in to perch on the topmost bare twigs of a tall silver birch on the roadside near my home. Presently the male took off in level flight for 3-4 metres and then, to my surprise, flew vertically upwards in a flycatcher-like flight for about 4 metres and remained almost stationary for 5-6 seconds, with wings beating strongly, and angling acutely above the back to give more power to each downward stroke. He then dropped to the level of the female, circled her in level flight at 3-4 metres several times, and then repeated the vertical flight. This performance continued for some 9 minutes, with the vertical flights always in the quarter which the female was facing. It was obviously mating display, perhaps induced by a succession of clear spring-like days.

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