

REVIEWS

Un nouvel albatros Diomedea amsterdamensis n. sp. decouvert sur l'île Amsterdam (37°50'S, 77°35'E), by J. P. Roux; P. Jouventin; J. L. Mougín; J. C. Stahl and H. Weimerskirch. *Oiseau Revue Fr. Orn.*, 53 (1): 1-11.

Ever since 1953, when Patrice Paulian published a photograph in his massive paper on the mammals and birds of Kerguelen and Amsterdam Is. (Mem. Inst. Scient. Madagascar, 8: 111-234), it has been known that a dark-plumaged giant albatross inhabited Amsterdam Island in the Indian Ocean. Most of us assumed that it was a small form of Wandering Albatross, similar to that found on Antipodes Island. Not so: in 1981 the adults were at last closely observed and were found to combine characters of both Wandering and Royal Albatrosses with some special features of their own. They breed in heavily mottled plumage like our Antipodes birds but have *black tails, black thighs* and *black upperwings*. Their underwings resemble those of the other giant albatrosses but have a *prominent dark mark along the leading edge at the base of the wing*. The bill is flesh coloured with a *dark line along the cutting edges of the upper mandible* and a *dark brownish-green patch on both nails*. These distinctive features, together with the geographical isolation and very late breeding season (eggs are laid in the first half of March) support the authors' view that the bird warrants full specific status.

The dark tail and underwing pattern should facilitate identification at sea, but we seem unlikely to have to exercise our skills around New Zealand because only about five eggs are laid annually and the total population of 30-50 birds is even smaller than that of the Short-tailed Albatross of the North Pacific.

Oddly enough all the four albatrosses shot off Amsterdam Island on 7 April 1964 by F. B. Gill (Proc. U.S. Natn. Mus., 123(3605): 1-33. 1967) appear to have been Wandering Albatrosses, not the locally breeding species.

John Warham

New Zealand Birds, produced by Warren Jacobs with text by Don Brathwaite, Don Hadden and John Warham, Kowhai Publishing Ltd. 1983. 111 pp. 105 species illustrated with 125 colour plates. \$19.95.

This book presents a collection of bird prints from some of our leading bird photographers.

The prints are grouped in sections. "Inhabitants of our Coasts" and "Birds of the Forest" both have the introductory texts and informative subtitles written by Don Brathwaite. Don Hadden deals with "Dwellers of the Wetlands" and John Warham with "The Oceanic Birds."