

SHAGS ON SHIPS

The two following notes contain further evidence of the crossing of the Tasman Sea by shags. Both were made by friends of Captain John Jenkins who in his absence asked me to prepare them for publication.

The first note, from a diligent diarist, indicates that some Black Shags were crossing the Tasman in the spring of 1976.

R.B.S.

6 November 1976. *Marama*. Sydney to Wellington. Two Black Shags were seen flying around the ship in the morning. By the afternoon, 12 Black Shags were about, mostly sitting on the radar mast. At noon the vessel was 659 miles (1061 km) from Sydney, about in mid-Tasman.

P. BRAE

On 26 November 1977, M.V. *Karepo* was steaming north off the west coast of New Zealand on a voyage from Westport/Greymouth to Portland (Whangarei). As we passed about 50 miles (80 km) off Kahurangi Point we were joined by a group of shags. I put the number at 13, but others gave differing figures from 10 to 18. When I first saw them, they were following in the wake. I did not recognise them as they were soaring as gracefully as any other seabird and were not using the cumbersome flapping flight I associate with shags. Towards evening, they came aboard and roosted overnight on the hatches and rails just forward of the bridge, despite heavy spray which at times was sufficient to dislodge them.

I am familiar enough with New Zealand shags to say that these were definitely shags. At first I thought they were young as I was sure they were slightly smaller than usual, but then I realised that they were all-black, with no white patches at all, a type of shag I had not seen before.

Next morning, 27 November, they were flying early and the numbers steadily dwindled. They kept flying and roosting during the day but, although I watched as much as I could, the group over the wake just seemed to decrease. The last vanished when we were 20 miles (32 km) to seaward of Reef Point.

B. M. COMMONS

We regret to announce the death on 23 February 1979 of Sir Robert Falla, a founder, the first President and a long-serving Council member of OSNZ. Sir Robert was a world figure in ornithology and a guide and friend to many ornithologists. An appreciation will appear in the next issue.