

CAPE GANNETS *SULA CAPENSIS* FEEDING A CAPE CORMORANT

PHALACROCORAX CAPENSIS CHICK

Interspecific feeding in free-living birds is rare except where it results from brood parasitism and artificial manipulation of clutches and broods. Shy (1982) recorded 140 instances, most involving passerines.

On 18 November 1982, an adult Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* was seen feeding a Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis* chick at Malgas Island (33 03S, 17 55E), southwestern Cape, South Africa. The chick was attended by a pair of gannets on a nest site on the edge of the gannet colony. One of the two adults was marked with picric acid and was seen attending and feeding the cormorant chick on subsequent days. It is not known if the chick survived since no observations were made after 28 November.

It is likely that the cormorant chick was adopted by gannets after hundreds of adult Cape Cormorants had abandoned their nests containing chicks (Duffy et al. 1984). Some of these nests were situated adjacent to the gannet colony. Both species belong to the Pelecaniformes and the chicks have superficially similar food-begging displays. In the Cape Cormorant, begging by the chick is directed at the parent's bill (Berry 1976) and includes swaying movements (pers. obs.). The vocalization of older chicks during begging is described as a three-syllabled, high-pitched and musical warbling (Berry 1976). There are no detailed descriptions of the begging of the Cape Gannet chick (cf. Jarvis 1971), but Nelson has described the begging behaviour of chicks of the North Atlantic Gannet *S. bassana*, which is very closely related to the Cape Gannet (Nelson 1978). The chick points its bill upwards, swaying its head from side to side while making lunges at the parent's beak. In high-intensity begging, a repeated 'yipping' note is made. This description applies to the Cape Gannet (pers. obs.). It is suggested that the similarity in begging behaviour of the Cape Cormorant and Cape Gannet and close proximity of the abandoned cormorant chicks to the gannet colony allowed interspecific feeding to occur.

A North Atlantic Gannet was seen to attend a brood of Shags *P. aristotelis* on the Shag's nest at Bass Rock, Scotland but feeding was not recorded (J.B. Nelson in litt.). North Atlantic Gannets have been recorded feeding Guillemot *Uria aalge* chicks on two occasions at Bempton, England, where Guillemots nest among gannets. The chicks had difficulty in accepting food from the gannets and did not survive (J.B. Nelson in litt.). Interspecific feeding involving Pelecaniformes was not recorded by Shy (1982).

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DARK MORPH FREGETTA STORMPETREL SOUTH OF AFRICA

The field identification of the sibling species Whitebellied *Fregatta grallaria* and Blackbellied *F. tropica* Stormpetrels is complicated by intra-specific variation in the colour of the belly, which is the main identification criterion at sea (Harrison 1983). Little is known of the frequency with which colour variants occur, or their geographic range (Bourne 1960), but they appear to be rare in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans (Harrison 1983). We know of no previous records of dark morph *Fregatta* stormpetrels from the African sector of the Southern Ocean.

On 28 February 1987 we observed a dark morph *Fregatta* stormpetrel from the M.V. S.A. Agulhas south of the Subtropical Convergence at 42 31S, 23 32E. The bird was completely black below, including the underwing coverts. Identification as a *Fregatta* stormpetrel was made on the basis of shape (broader-winged than Wilson's Stormpetrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, with a more rounded and broader tail) and the characteristic flight silhouette and progression (see Harrison 1983). Upperpart colouration was typical of a *Fregatta* stormpetrel, including the white rump, and it was only when the bird "rocked" over, showing its underparts, that the difference was apparent.

It was not possible to identify the dark morph individual to the species level with certainty. We suspect that it was a Blackbellied Stormpetrel because it had the dark, rich brown upperwing coverts typical of this species, and there was no trace of ashy-edged feathers on the back and upperwing coverts which give Whitebellied Stormpetrels a paler appearance above at sea (Harrison 1983, pers. obs.). Habitat also suggested Blackbellied Stormpetrel, because sea-surface temperature was low (12,6°C). Whitebellied Stormpetrels were observed in water of this temperature, but were more abundant in warmer waters north of the Subtropical Convergence. On the day we observed 29 Blackbellied to two Whitebellied Stormpetrels. Apparently the only other records of dark morph *Fregatta* stormpetrels are from Lord Howe Island off the east coast of Australia and are of Whitebellied Stormpetrels (Serventy et al. 1971).

This apparently is the first record of a dark morph *Fregatta* stormpetrel from the African sector of the Southern Ocean. They undoubtedly are rare in the area, but observers should be aware of their existence and the possibility of confusion with other dark stormpetrels with white rumps.

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INSECTS IN THE DIET OF THE BLUE PETREL *HALOBAENA CAERULEA* AT MARION ISLAND

Stomach contents of Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea* were collected at sub-Antarctic Marion Island (46 52S, 37 51E) between November 1984 and April 1985 using various methods (Steele & Klages 1986), to ascertain summer diets.

Two species of terrestrial insect, an assassin bug (Nabidae) and a noctuid moth (Noctuidae), were found in samples collected on three specific days. The assassin bug was tentatively identified as *Nabis capsiformis*, a cosmopolitan species (Scholtz & Holm 1985). Neither of these insects are known to occur on Marion Island (Crafford et al. 1986). Twelve of 24 adult Blue Petrel regurgitations collected on 7 and 8 January 1985 contained one or both of these insect species, and a stomach of a fledgling dissected on 28 April 1985 contained a single moth among other food items. In total, 20 assassin bugs were found in three stomach samples and 23 moths in 11 samples. Thus, the mean number of insects was 2,1 moths and/or 6,7 assassin bugs per sample. Of 49 Blue Petrel stomach samples collected during the total period, 13 (27 %) contained insects.

Blue Petrels feed on the surface of the ocean (Harper et al. 1985) with an estimated foraging range while breeding of 670 km (Croxall et al. 1984). It seems certain that the birds picked up the insects as they floated on the sea in a moribund state, after being blown southwards. The samples which contained insects were all collected from the western side of Marion Island, which is most exposed to the weather and its prevailing westerly wind.

Records of insects far out at sea are scattered in the literature. These have been summarized and reviewed by Bowden & Johnson (1976), who conclude that the deposition of insects in ocean areas of low productivity may constitute an important additional source of food. Cheng & Birch (1978) call insect flotsam an "unstudied marine source" in their report on its importance as a seasonal source of food for surface-feeding marine fish. Insects have also been found in the stomachs of closely related prions *Pachyptila* spp. feeding in the Benguela system off South Africa (S. Jackson pers. comm.). It seems unlikely, however, that non-endemic insects are a regular occurrence in the diet of Blue Petrels at Marion Island.

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GREYHEADED GULLS *LARUS CIRROCEPHALUS* FEEDING ON INSECTS AT NIGHT

When I arrived at Jan Smuts Airport, Johannesburg, South Africa, on 3 June 1987 at 20h30 (about three hours after local sunset), eight Greyheaded Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus* were hawking insects attracted to the main floodlights overlooking the apron. There were no gulls at less powerful floodlights on the opposite side of the apron. When I left the same airport on 5 June 1987 at 18h30 (soon after dusk) no gulls were present. Simon (1977) observed Hartlaub's Gulls *L. hartlaubii* feeding at night on insects attracted to street lighting on the Foreshore in Cape Town, and at the fishing harbour at Saldanha Bay. Gulls in South Africa have also been recorded feeding on insects during the daytime (Greyheaded Gulls by Milstein (1970) and Kelp Gulls *L. dominicanus* by Haarhoff (1982), Summers (1977) and Taylor (1952)).

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ATTEMPTED PISCIVORY AND PIRACY OF WADERS BY HARTLAUB'S GULLS

LARUS HARTLAUBII AT THE UILKRAALS ESTUARY

The Uilkraals is a small permanently open estuary lying on the southwestern Cape coast of South Africa at 34 36S, 19 24E. In common with many such South African estuaries it provides a nursery ground for juvenile marine fish, particularly mullet (Mugilidae) (Heydorn & Bickerton 1982). On 26 January 1987 numerous shoals of juvenile mullet, 30-40 mm in length, were seen moving with the rising tide across the shallow sandflats upstream of the road bridge. Some 20 Hartlaub's Gulls *Larus hartlaubii* were present on the estuary of which at any one time three or four were seen pursuing the shoals of juvenile mullet. The birds flew close to the water surface (precluding full downstrokes of the wings) driving the fish ahead of them towards the shore where the birds lunged at the melée with their beaks while alighting. During approximately an hour's observation none was seen to catch any fish although in the considerable splashing that accompanied the operation fish could have been swallowed unobserved.

Little has been published on the diet and feeding of Hartlaub's Gulls. In urban areas it forages at refuse tips and on sportsfields, particularly after rain when it "foot paddles" in search of earthworms (Steyn 1957). At sea Hartlaub's Gulls seize prey at the surface either by dipping in flight or by surface seizing while swimming (Walter 1984) although Duffy (1982) has reported Hartlaub's Gulls taking prey up to one metre below the sea surface. Off southern South West Africa/Namibia Hartlaub's Gulls have been reported to take deepwater mesopelagic fish such as hake *Merluccius* sp., lantern fish *Lampanyctodes* sp. and the Pelagic Goby *Sufflogobius bibarbatatus* (Walter 1984).

In addition to Hartlaub's Gulls, the mullet were preyed upon by a single Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, which were seen to be harassed by Hartlaub's Gulls immediately upon catching a fish. The attempts at piracy were not pursued with much determination and both waders were able to swallow their prey although the Grey Plover was forced to fly to a sand bank where it subdued and swallowed its fish. Neither Maclean (1985) nor Cramp & Simmons (1982) record fish as part of the Grey Plover's diet whereas both note the Greenshank's piscivorous habits. However, Dement'ev & Gladkov (1969) mention "and in one (Grey Plover) stomach a small unidentified fish was found". Fish eating by Grey Plovers appears to be a rare occurrence.

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NEW SEABIRD BREEDING LOCALITIES, AND AN EXTENSION OF BANK
CORMORANT RANGE, ALONG THE NAMIB COAST OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Whitebreasted Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

The breeding distribution of the Whitebreasted Cormorant along the southern African coast has been reviewed by Brooke *et al.* (1982) and additional localities have been identified (Hockey 1983, Brooke 1984, Cooper & Brooke 1986, Cooper 1987). Two small colonies (the 67th and 68th now known) not described in these accounts have recently been found along the Namib Coast.

At Sandwich Harbour in the mid 1970s (no precise date known) a small wooden fishing vessel, the *Gamsberg*, ran aground, and subsequently broke up, in the bay between the sandbar which then closed off Sandwich Harbour and Ilhea Point (at approximately 23 20S, 14 28E). Whitebreasted Cormorants have for several seasons bred on this wreck with a maximum of ten nests at one time (pers. obs., R. Vinjevold pers. comm.).

Thirteen occupied Whitebreasted Cormorant nests were found in mid November 1985 on the remains of two piers (12 nests on the western, one nest on the eastern) near the derelict crafish factory in Hottentot Bay (26 08S, 14 57E) (Williams in press).

Cape Cormorant

Phalacrocorax capensis

Cooper *et al.* (1982) review the breeding distribution of this endemic southern African cormorant. A number of additional breeding localities have since been described (Cooper & Smith 1982, Cooper & Brooke 1986, Loutit *et al.* 1986, Cooper 1987).

A colony of c. 40 nests was found on North Head (25 40S, 14 50E), a previously unreported breeding locality, just north of Spencer Bay, in late November 1985 (Williams in press). This is the 63rd known colony of the species (Cooper 1987).

Bank Cormorant

Phalacrocorax neglectus

The distribution of the Bank Cormorant, a species endemic to southern Africa, has been reviewed by Cooper (1981) who found that the northernmost breeding locality was Hollamsbird Island (34 47S, 19 40E) and that the northern limit of the nonbreeding range was at Walvis Bay (23 50S, 14 32E).

In November 1985 a colony of 90 nests was found on the tiny islet (26 08S, 14 57E) in Hottentotsbaai on the Diamond Coast north of Lüderitz. This islet lies well within the established breeding range but was not reported as a breeding locality by Cooper (1981). It is not named on the 1:50,000 survey map (2614B & 2615AA Hottentotsbaai) and for convenience is here called "Neglectus Islet" after the Bank Cormorants breeding there. Since all the large islands off the Namib coast belong to South Africa, this is technically only the third proven breeding colony of this species in South West Africa/Namibia (Siegfried & Johnson 1977, Shaughnessy 1980,

Cooper 1981). This is the 45th colony known for the species (Cooper 1981, Cooper 1982).

In recent years small numbers of Bank Cormorants have regularly been reported along the coast between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund (pers. obs., SWA/Namibia Directorate of Nature Conservation bird atlas project data). In mid September 1986 several Bank Cormorants were seen among Cape and Whitebreasted Cormorants on the concrete supports of the former railway bridge over the Swakop River just south of Swakopmund (22 40S, 14 31E). Following the February 1986 flow of the Swakop River these supports have been surrounded by water of the lagoon formed at the river mouth. Some of the Bank Cormorants had fully developed white rumps, an indication of nuptial condition in this species (Cooper 1985a). Two of the birds with white rumps stood together and were manipulating nest materials, giving pair displays, and mutually defending the site. This all suggested a strong intention to breed. However, when the site was visited again in mid October 1986 there were no cormorants on the concrete supports so it is unknown whether egg-laying occurred at this locality, which is about 150 km north of the northernmost established breeding locality at Hollamsbird Island (Cooper 1981).

In mid April 1986, eight Bank Cormorants, with obvious crests and lacking any yellow gular skin, were perched with smaller Cape Cormorants on an intertidal rock in the bay immediately west of the sealing station at Cape Cross (21 46S, 13 58E). Subsequently, in early December 1986, two Bank Cormorants were seen a few hundred metres east of the sealing station. This locality is 120 km north of the northern limit of the previous established range at Walvis Bay, from which it is separated by an almost entirely sandy shore.

Bank Cormorants generally forage in kelp beds (Williams & Burger 1978, Cooper 1985b). North of Cape Cross there are few kelp beds (pers. obs.). In addition there are few areas where suitable roosting places exist within easy foraging range of the kelp beds. Despite several visual checks, Bank Cormorants have never been recorded among the Whitebreasted and Cape Cormorants which roost on the wrecked fishing vessel in Durissa Bay, the next potential roosting site for Bank Cormorants north of Cape Cross.

Crowned Cormorant

Phalacrocorax coronatus

The distribution of this cormorant, which like the Cape and Bank Cormorants is endemic to southern Africa, has been reviewed by Crawford *et al.* (1982). They do not report breeding by Crowned Cormorants at Mercury Island (25 43S, 14 50E), although this species has formerly been found there (R.J.M. Crawford pers. comm.).

In November 1985 a maximum of 50 Crowned Cormorants was observed roosting on the island and nine occupied nests were seen in and near the south exit of the main cave on the western side of the island. Crowned Cormorants were present,

but no breeding was recorded, in mid April 1986 but in early August 1986 three nests were again occupied in the main cave. This is the 42nd known colony of the species Brooke & Cooper 1982, Cooper 1982, Crawford et al. 1982, Hockey 1983, Cooper & Brooke 1986).

Swift Tern

Sterna bergii

In early August 1986 Swift Terns were found breeding (10+ downy and almost fledged young) in South West Africa/Namibia on an inaccessible islet in the extreme southwestern pan of the Swakopmund Saltworks (22 36S, 14 31E). This is the northernmost breeding locality of this species along the Atlantic coast of southern Africa (SWA/Namibia Directorate of Nature Conservation, unpubl. data).

Breeding (numbers unknown) was also attempted in 1986 at Walvis Bay in a little used section of the fenced off harbour area near the yacht club (22 57S, 14 29E) (S. Braine pers. comm.).

In August 1986, a mixed breeding colony of Hartlaub's Gulls *Larus hartlaubii* and Swift Terns was found on Penguin Island (26 37S, 15 09E) just north of Lüderitz. The colony was believed to be founded by birds displaced from an earlier breeding attempt within Lüderitz Harbour (Komen et al. 1986).

Swift Terns were seen displaying and copulating in April 1986 on an islet in a freshwater channel (28 36S, 16 28E) just south of the Orange River mouth area adjacent to Alexander Bay (Williams 1986). The islet held a large group of Hartlaub's Gulls which appeared ready to breed. The Swift Terns were settled in two groups in the centre of the gulls. This locality could not be revisited so it was impossible to determine whether either species had bred on the island. Juvenile Swift Terns were seen in August 1986 within the river mouth area (Williams & Myer in press) but, although possibly locally bred, may have moved there from Possession Island, a frequently used breeding locality (Rand 1963, Cooper et al. 1977, nest record cards held by the SWA/Namibia Directorate of Nature Conservation) some 100 km to the north, where at least 100 young were reared to fledging in 1986 (pers. obs.).

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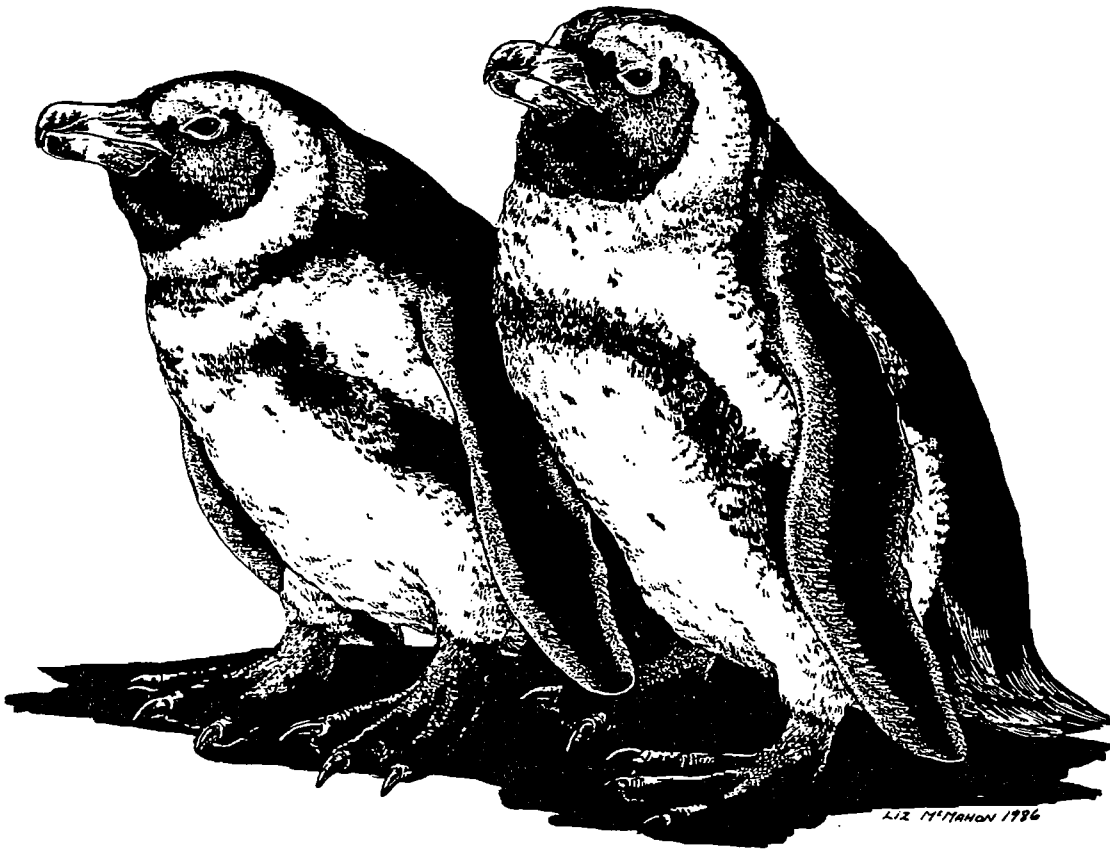
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RECORDS OF THE LIGHTMANTLED SOOTY ALBATROSS *PHOEBETRIA*

PALPEBRATA AT THE TRISTAN DA CUNHA ISLANDS AND GOUGH ISLAND

The genus *Phoebetria* comprises two extant species: the Sooty Albatross *P. fusca* and Lightmantled Sooty Albatross *P. palpebrata*, which are superficially similar. The main long range field character is the colour of the back (Harrison 1983). In Lightmantled Sooty Albatrosses this is pale brown from the nape to the rump and appears frosty-grey in contrast with the dark brown head and wings. In the Sooty Albatross the whole plumage is an even dark brown except that birds with worn plumage may have a pale brown or greyish collar and upper back but never show the sharp contrast between wing and back colour of *palpebrata*.

At the Tristan da Cunha Islands and at Gough Island *fusca* is a common breeding species and *palpebrata* a rarely reported nonbreeding visitor (Elliott 1957, Swales 1965, Williams & Imber 1982, Enticott 1984, Richardson 1984). The purpose of this note is to correct some comments in the literature concerning the occurrence of *palpebrata* at these islands.

The earliest record of *palpebrata* at these islands is Clarke's (1905) report that in April 1904 it occurred near Gough Island "in somewhat less numbers than the last [*fusca*]".

A single male *Phoebetria* albatross was collected near or at Nightingale Island, in the Tristan da Cunha Islands by John Kirby on 29 September 1945 and was later obtained by the Transvaal Museum (Roberts 1948) where A. Roberts labelled it *palpebrata*. Hagen (1952) doubted this record on the grounds that all additional data in Robert's account dealt with the eggs of *fusca* and Elliott (1957) also considered Robert's identification in error. This specimen, the only *Phoebetria* albatross from the Tristan da Cunha Islands held by the Transvaal Museum (TM 25848), is a *fusca* although labelled *palpebrata* by Roberts (T. Cassidy *in litt.*).

Broekhuysen & Macnae (1949) visited the islands between 6 February and 7 March 1948. They state that *Phoebetria* albatrosses are difficult to separate at a distance and cautiously do not refer their sightings to either species and refer to Kirby's record without commenting on its validity. Elliott (1957) states, and Richardson (1984) implies, that *palpebrata* was seen by Broekhuysen and Macnae off Gough Island though careful reading of the original account reveals no positive record of *palpebrata* nor any reason to suspect that the birds Broekhuysen and Macnae saw were other than *fusca*. Elliott (1957) also states that their records are from March and April although from the title and text of their paper it

is clear that Broekhuysen and Macnae made their observations in February and early March.

Subsequent records, none accompanied by any description, of *palpebrata* at the islands are: a single bird close inshore at Gough Island on 30 April 1956 (Swales 1965); three well east of Gough Island in April 1973 (Bourne & Curtis 1985); a single bird at sea between Tristan and Inaccessible Islands on 15 January 1974 (Richardson 1984); and, "off" Gough Island, six in October and one in November 1982 (Enticott 1984).

That there are only five further reports of *palpebrata* at the Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands suggests that this species is no more than a vagrant to these islands which lie close to the northern edge of the species' pelagic range. However, the fact that on two occasions several have been seen at a time suggests that the species is more likely to be an infrequent, though probably annual, visitor and that the scarcity of records reflects the paucity of observers at and near these islands.

The population of this species within the South Atlantic Ocean is not known accurately. The nearest breeding localities to the Tristan da Cunha Islands and Gough Island are South Georgia and the Prince Edward Islands where the annual breeding populations, of this basically biennial breeding species (Kerry & Garland 1984), are c. 5,000 pairs (Thomas et al. 1983) and c. 250 pairs (Williams et al. 1979) respectively. Nonbreeding Lightmantled Sooty Albatrosses have a circumpolar pelagic range over deep ocean waters generally between the Antarctic pack-ice and the Subtropical Convergence (Watson et al. 1971). The position of the Subtropical Convergence in the South Atlantic Ocean lies close to or athwart the Tristan da Cunha Islands and Gough Island. It is therefore to be expected that the species would be of infrequent occurrence at these islands and that it should be seen more often near Gough Island at or south of the Convergence than at the Tristan da Cunha Islands which are generally to the north of the Convergence (Watson 1975).

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