

VAGRANT BIRDS AT POSSESSION ISLAND, CROZET ISLANDS AND KERGUELEN ISLAND FROM DECEMBER 1995 TO DECEMBER 1997

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The Sub-Antarctic Crozet and Kerguelen Archipelagos are situated in the southern Indian Ocean, approximately 2500 km from Africa and 1500 km from Antarctica. Observations of vagrant birds were made on Possession Island (46°25'S, 51°45'E; 145 km²), Crozet Archipelago and on Grande Terre (48°35'S, 68°43'E; 7215 km²), Kerguelen Archipelago. We observed 10 vagrant species from December 1995 to December 1996 on Kerguelen and to December 1997 on Crozet.

SPECIES LIST

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

One adult, harassed by a Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*, landed in a King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* colony at Baie du Marin, Crozets, on 6 March 1997.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Eleven individuals were observed at Pointe Charlotte, Kerguelen, on 4 February 1996. They were still present on 17 April 1996. Twelve individuals in breeding plumage were seen from 25 to 27 April 1996 at the same locality. All these observations are thought to refer to the same group of birds (Fig. 1). Four individuals were present at the same locality on 18 November 1996.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Nine individuals were observed at Pointe Charlotte, Kerguelen, on 21 and 22 December 1995 (Fig. 2). They were still present on 4 February 1996. One individual was seen between Pointe Charlotte and Pointe Morne on 16 October 1996 and one at Pointe Charlotte on 18 November 1996.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

One individual was seen at Pointe de l'Etang, Kerguelen, on 4 February 1996 and one, probably the same bird, on 17 April 1996 at Pointe Charlotte.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Seven Greenshanks were observed at Pointe Charlotte, Kerguelen, on 21 and 22 December 1995, and one was found dead south of Cap Rouge, Kerguelen, on 2 February 1996. Two birds were seen at Hallage des Naufragés, Kerguelen, on 3 November 1996, and three at Pointe Charlotte on 18 November 1996. Three birds were

seen in flight on 28 September 1996 at Baie du Marin, Crozets. They tried to land on the beach among King Penguins but continued to fly inland. Five birds were present from 29 October to 2 November 1996, six from 20 to 30 November 1996, and five on 17 January 1997 at Baie Américaine. Three birds were observed on 14 November 1996 and seven on 21 January 1997 at La Hébé. The birds at Baie Américaine and La Hébé were probably of the same group.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

One adult in breeding plumage was present from 9–17 December 1996 at Baie du Marin, Crozets (Fig. 3).

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

A first-winter bird was seen on 5 November 1996 with Kelp Gulls *L. dominicanus* at Alfred Faure Station, Crozets. The plumage (Fig. 4) suggests a bird of the central Asian steppes forms (e.g. Baraba Gull *L. (cachinnans) barabensis*).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

One on 28 and two on 29 December 1995 in winter plumage rested on the coast with Kerguelen Terns *S. virgata* at Baie du Marin, Crozets.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

One was seen on 15 and 22 March 1996, one on 19 November 1996, and one from 20–26 December 1996 in flight with Kerguelen Terns. All were seen at Baie du Marin, Crozets.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Singletons were observed from 20–30 April 1996 and on 23 May 1997 at Baie du Marin, Crozets. The latter bird died the following day. Both birds roosted at night in sheds.

DISCUSSION

Eight of the ten vagrant species observed belong to the Palearctic avifauna. Most birds were charadriid waders. They probably arrived at the sub-Antarctic islands following tropical storms. To our knowledge, the observation of a Yellow-legged Gull is the first at a sub-Antarctic island in the Indian Ocean. A Terek Sandpiper has been reported previously at the Prince Edward Islands



Fig. 1. Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* at Pointe Charlotte, Kerguelen Island, April 1996.



Fig. 2. Sanderlings *Calidris alba* at Pointe Charlotte, Kerguelen Island, December 1995.



Fig. 3. Adult Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* in breeding plumage at Possession Island, Crozet Archipelago, December 1996.



Fig. 4. Immature Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* at Alfred Faure Station, Possession Island, Crozet Archipelago, November 1996.

(Berruti & Schramm 1981). The other species have been observed previously at the Crozet and Kerguelen Archipelagos (Prévost & Mougín 1970, Barrat 1974, Thomas 1983, Stahl *et al.* 1984, Ausilio & Zotier 1989). Cattle Egrets have been observed on Possession Island during April 1982 (Stahl *et al.* 1984) and in 2000 (S. Descamps pers. comm.). This species is also known to be common in the South Atlantic Ocean (Orgeira 1996) and at the Prince Edward Islands (Berruti & Schramm 1981). The most regular and numerous wader was the Greenshank, which has previously been observed in 1971, 1979, 1980, 1988 and also in 2001 (Barrat 1974, Thomas 1983, Stahl *et al.* 1984, Ausilio & Zotier 1989, pers. obs.). Arctic Terns have been previously observed in 1978 and 1979 (Stahl *et al.* 1984) and could be regular during the austral summer when migrating to Antarctica. However, this species in winter plumage is often hard to differentiate from the local tern species. Brown Noddies were observed each austral summer at Possession Island from 1995 to 2001 (S. Descamps pers. comm., pers. obs.). Each observation was of a single bird. A previous observation of a Barn Swallow occurred on 12 May 1971 on Possession Island (Barrat 1974). Our observations occurred at similar dates, which correspond to the spring migration of the species.

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