

# Dominican Gulls in Australian Antarctic Territory

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New records of Dominican Gulls *Larus dominicanus* for Australian Antarctic Territory are reported. The recent colonisation of Australia by Dominican Gulls is summarised, and it is tentatively suggested that the species may be similarly expanding its range in the south.

The first two sightings of Dominican or Kelp Gulls in Australian Antarctic Territory were reported by Ingham (1962): at Wilkes Station (66° 15' S., 110° 31' E.) in 1957, and at Mawson Station (67° 36' S., 62° 53' E.) in December 1958 and January 1959. Another was sighted at Wilkes Station by Z. Soucek on 31 October 1962.

No further sightings were made until 18 November 1968 when R. A. Mackenzie sighted one being pursued by skuas near Casey Station two km south of Wilkes. Dominican Gulls were again sighted at Casey on 13 November 1971 when two birds flew over the Station and settled on the sea-ice nearby, away from the McCormick's Skuas *Catharacta skua maccormicki* which had congregated outside the kitchen (J. Ackerly and D. V. Evans, pers. comm.). The birds returned next day and settled on the sea-ice for between half and one hour. A wind with gusts of 30-40 knots (15-20 m s) was blowing at the time.

Near Davis Station one adult was seen on a small unnamed island (68° 40' S., 77° 51' E.) on 16 January 1972 by G.W.J. It was standing on a crag about 30 m above the water and flew off as the observer approached in a small boat. It was immediately chased by a McCormick's Skua and disappeared from view. The rocks beside where it had been standing were spattered with white guano and there were several pellets containing bones and penguin feathers. Probably it was a perch frequented by skuas as it com-

manded a wide view of the surroundings. The gull did not call and showed no sign of the alarm which would have been expected if it had a nest in the vicinity.

Dominican Gulls breed in the Antarctic only on the islands of the Scotia Arc and the Antarctic Peninsula south to Marguerite Bay (68° 30' S., 68° 30' W.) (Stonehouse, 1964). We have found only three records of their occurrence in other parts of the Antarctic continent: Korotkevitch (1964) stated that the species was an infrequent visitor at Mirny Station (66° 33' S., 93° 01' E., between Davis and Casey), Spellerberg (1971) reported a sighting at Cape Royds (77° 33' S., 166° 09' E.) in December 1965, and Prevost and Mougín (1970) reported an adult in December 1968 in Terre Adelie (68° 40' S., 140° 01' E.).

Their western breeding range covers 62 degrees of latitude with a northernmost breeding station on Lobos de Tierra (6° 20' S., 80° 50' W.) off the north coast of Peru (Murphy, 1936). In the eastern part of its range the Dominican Gull is more restricted latitudinally, being common only on subantarctic islands and round the coasts of New Zealand. Its occurrence in Australia is conveniently summarised by Serventy, Serventy and Warham (1971). The first Australian record is a first-year specimen in the Western Australian Museum, collected near Perth in August 1924 and thought from its body measurements to be of New Zealand provenance (Ford, 1965). The

next record was a sighting near Botany Bay in January 1943 (McGill, 1943 and 1955), and since then there have been many observations along the eastern coast of Australia as far north as Cairns (16° 51' S., 145° 43' E.) and south to Tasmania (Wall, 1956). It has been recorded in Western Australia from Esperance north to Jurien Bay (30° 20' S., 115° 00' E.) (Ford, 1964). The first record for South Australia was of a subadult in March 1968 at Outer Harbour (Glover, 1969); several adults have been seen since.

Breeding in Australia was first reported on Moon Island (33° 10' S., 151° 15' E.), New South Wales, in December 1958 (Gwynne and Gray, 1959), and a breeding population has since become established on Bass, Martin and Flinders Islands in the Five Islands group 84 km to the south-south-west (Battam, 1970). In Tasmania breeding was first recorded in 1962 (Wolfe, 1969); Dominican Gulls now breed on at least three Tasmanian islands. The first breeding record for Victoria was at Seal Rocks, Westernport Bay (R. Warneke, pers. comm.). A pair was first seen there on 18 December 1970 and on 6 January 1971 a nest with two eggs was found. Apparently this pair was unsuccessful, and although Dominican Gulls have been seen regularly since there is no evidence of further attempts at breeding.

Chicks have been banded at Moon Island and the Five Islands. One banded at Moon Island on 12 December 1962 was recovered 3350 km west (4500 km by coast) at Shoalwater Bay 26 km south of Fremantle, Western Australia, on 29 August 1966 (Gray 1967), showing the distance over which the immature birds may disperse.

The recent colonisation of southern Australia represents a northern expansion of the eastern part of the species' range. The sightings in Australian Antarctic Territory may possibly mark the beginning of a similar expansion of range in the south.

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