

Giant Petrel Banding near Barwon Heads, Victoria

Since 1958, I have kept population notes of giant petrels *Macronectes sp.* visible from the shore at Black Rocks between Barwon Heads and Torquay, Victoria. These birds usually arrive early in June each year and frequently up to 30 may be seen during July and August. The numbers dwindle about mid September and they are rarely sighted during the summer.

At the instigation of Dr Gavin Johnstone, a Geelong Group decided to attempt to catch and band visiting Antarctic seabirds which frequent Black Rocks where the sewerage outfall for the Geelong district is located. On 3 August 1972, two boats from the Corio Search and Rescue Squad put to sea via the Barwon River outlet. Gavin Johnstone and I manned one boat while Trevor Pescott and Harold Maher manned the other. Conditions were excellent with a flat sea and only a slight off-shore breeze. About 30 giant petrels and a few albatrosses, apparently having fed, were sitting on the water up to 1.5 km off-shore.

Under Gavin Johnstone's directions we soon learned the technique used by the New South Wales Albatross Study Group and a Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* was the second bird caught. This was the only albatross caught although there were several Black-browed Albatrosses *D. melanophris* further out. The total for the day included 13 *M. giganteus* and two *M. halli*.

On the second trip on 3 September 1972, despite lack of wind, a heavy swell made catching difficult. About 50 giant petrels were in the area but most were too elusive. Only seven *giganteus* and four *halli* were caught, the few albatrosses seen remained out of range.

In the two outings for the season, a very reasonable start has been made by the Group, and already has resulted in one recovery; one

giganteus (130-60247) which was banded on the first outing was found dead at Nadgee Nature Reserve on the south coast of N.S.W. on 23 September (see Recovery Round-up this issue).

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• Southern Giant Petrel with downy chick on Nelly Island, Antarctica. The nest is made of pebbles and the adult bird is in a threat posture.

ANARE photograph by M. D. Murray