

Follow the Band!

WANDERING ALBATROSS 140-25258

Some Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* are more durable than some bands; therefore we follow here, the bird, and not strictly the band. Some Wanderers have longer histories, others have had more exciting adventures than the one recorded here, but this one is no mean traveller and the story rests on data from two separate banding schemes a hemisphere apart. Acknowledgement is made of the work of Dr W. L. N. Tickell on the biology of *D. exulans* carried out on South Georgia. The map shows the locations mentioned and the known breeding islands.

Wandering Albatross 140-25258 is an imposing, snowy-plumaged bird, a proven master of the southern oceans and above all, big—even for an albatross. He comes from Bird Island, South Georgia, where over 3,000 pairs nest. Another 1,600 pairs occupy mainland South Georgia but Bird Island which is only about four miles long by one mile wide, accounts for a significant part of the world population. As Wanderers usually breed biennially, roughly half the nesters occupy the breeding grounds each year.

Typically, the egg is laid about Christmas time, incubation is shared and hatching occurs in March. The fledging period averages about nine months, for several of which the ground is frozen, the snow accumulates and the mercury can plunge to minus 10°C. Insulated by thick down and the fat laid on by parental feeding every three to four days, about 80 per cent of nestlings survive to fly from the island the following December as the next season's adults arrive.

In the summer of 1960/61, W. L. N. Tickell and others of the U.S. Antarctic Research Program (Bird Banding Program) set up a base camp at Jordan Cove, Bird Island, to continue their study of the Wanderer which had started two years previously. The tussock covered slopes of Wanderer Valley rise behind the camp, exposed to the prevailing winds—a favoured nesting area.

On 1 February 1961 our subject made his first acquaintance with bird banders when U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service band 528-71119 was wrapped on his right leg. He was noted as "adult" (from plumage) and was not nesting that summer.

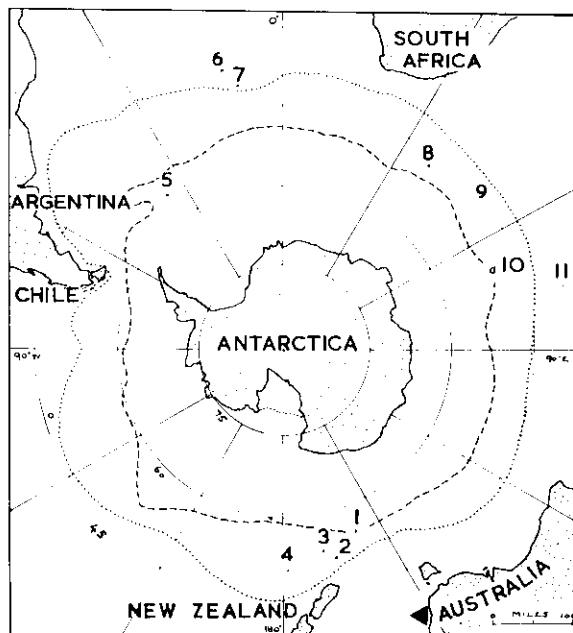
Breeding birds are confined by logistics within a range of about 200 nautical miles from the nest while adults not feeding nestlings get away from the island about May. Therefore when he was lifted aboard our boat off Bellambi, New South Wales, on 22 July 1961, less than six months after being banded at Bird Island some 7,000 miles away, he had obviously not undertaken a nesting commitment the previous summer and consequently had the option of doing so the next year (1962). He was weighed (27 lbs), a description of his plumage was recorded and he was given CSIRO band 140-03497 (aluminium). His weight and the whiteness of the plumage confirmed him as a male of mature years. Twenty-nine other Wanderers feeding in the same area were banded on that day.

Six months later he was back in the study area at Wanderer Valley where he was recorded on 28 January 1962, and where he was still not successful in obtaining a mate. Whatever his problem it was overcome the following summer when, on 13 December 1962 he had mated and was nesting in the same place. He was awarded a yellow plastic spiral band on the left leg.

If our bird now settled into a regular biennial routine he would be free to travel in 1964, 1966 etc. and, hopefully, to revisit us here. No further word could be expected from the South Georgia end of operations as these were soon to be discontinued. In the winter of 1964 he was not caught off Bellambi or Malabar but on 3 July 1966 he was again eating cuttlefish off Bellambi Point. He was caught with four others on the day. By this time aluminium bands had been proved to have an unsatisfactory life and were being replaced by similarly styled bands of monel metal whenever the opportunity arose. His replacement monel band number was 140-25258.

Three years passed before he was caught again, on 30 August 1969 (with 49 others) off Austinmer, a couple of miles north of Bellambi. Evidently another unsuccessful nesting had thrown his biennial routine out of gear again. Bird and bands were in excellent condition however, and obviously he was still enjoying his cuttlefish. An uncompromising force would soon direct him back to Wanderer Valley where, I hope, in 1970 he sired and helped raise another Wanderer to slice the roaring forties; at least he was not one of the 684 Wanderers caught off the N.S.W. coast that season.

J. D. (Doug) Gibson,
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◀ **BANDING STATIONS - BELLAMBI, MALABAR**
 --- **ANTARCTIC CONVERGENCE**
 **NORTHERN LIMIT OF DRIFT ICE**

1. MACQUARIE I. 2. AUCKLAND IS. 3. CAMPBELL I.
4. ANTIPODES IS. 5. SOUTH GEORGIA 6. TRISTAN DA CUNHA 7. GOUGH I. 8. PRINCE EDWARD IS.
9. CROZET IS. 10. KERGUELEN IS. 11. AMSTERDAM I.

● *Map showing the distribution of known breeding colonies of the Wandering Albatross.*

XVI International Ornithological Congress

The International Ornithological Committee agreed at the end of the XV International Ornithological Congress in the Hague, Netherlands, that the next Congress would be held in Australia in 1974. Professor J. Dorst was appointed President. The Australian invitation had been proffered jointly by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union and the Australian Academy of Science.

The Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union appointed Dr H. J. Frith as Secretary-General and an Australian Advisory Committee has been formed. After close examination of the possibilities the Australian Advisory Committee has decided that the XVI International Ornithological Congress should be held in the Australian National University in Canberra in

the period 12 August to 17 August 1974. A programme of scientific sessions, major and minor excursions and ornithological exhibits will be organised.

Applications for membership will be accepted until 1 March 1974. Applications for the presentation of papers and for arranging Specialists's Meetings should reach the Secretary-General not later than 1 February 1974. It is probable that, apart from those presented by invitation in a Symposium, there will be some selection of the papers that are actually read. Accordingly it is essential that each offer of a paper should be accompanied by a summary of about 200 words.

Information regarding the XVI International Ornithological Congress can be had from—

The Secretary-General,
 XVI International Ornithological Congress,
 P.O. Box 84, LYNEHAM, A.C.T. Australia, 2602.