

# Bird ringing at Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands, 1937-1977

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The Tristan da Cunha Island group consists of four islands, three of which, Tristan, Inaccessible and Nightingale, lie close together in the central South Atlantic near 37°S, 12°W. The fourth island, Gough, lies approximately 350 km SSE of the other three at 40°S, 10°W. The nearest continental land mass, Southern Africa, is about 2800 km to the east and the nearest point in South America lies some 3200 km westwards.

The first recorded ornithological exploration of the islands was in 1816 by Captain D. Carmichael of the British garrison at Tristan da Cunha (Holdgate, 1965). Various scientific expeditions called at the islands thereafter, notably the *Challenger* Expedition in 1873 and the vessels belonging to the *Discovery* Committee in the 1920s and 1930s. However, it was not until the Norwegian Scientific Expedition in 1937-1938 that any bird ringing was performed. Since 1937, a number of workers, amateur and professional, have been active in the area. Bird rings from Norway, Holland, South Africa and the United Kingdom (Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and

the British Trust for Ornithology) have been used at various times, making it difficult to obtain a coherent picture of the results, no one ornithological organization having assumed overall responsibility for the area. This paper summarizes the bird ringing operations at the Tristan da Cunha Island group between 1937 and 1977.

Twelve individuals or teams ringed a total of 4873 birds of 14 species during 1937-1977 (Tables 1 and 3). Thirty-seven birds — one Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*, 25 Yellow-nosed Albatrosses *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and 11 Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis* — were recovered or controlled frequently within a few months of being ringed (Tables 2, 4 and 5). A general pattern of dispersal can be obtained from these results: a north-westwards migration of Great Shearwaters to the Grand Banks area off Newfoundland and a north-eastwards movement of Yellow-nosed Albatrosses to the food-rich waters of the Benguela Current off the southern coast of Angola.

Table 1  
Bird ringing, numbers of birds ringed and years of operation at the Tristan Island Group

Bird ringers	No. of species	Total	Year of visit	Islands visited	Origin of rings used
Hagen <i>et al.</i>	3	1913	1937-1938	T I N	G Norway
Brockhuysen & Macnac	4	8	1948	T I N	G Holland
Upton	} 8	} 600	1950-1951	T	G South Africa
Elliott (H.F.I.)			1950-1952	T I N	G South Africa
Swales <i>et al.</i>	2	222	1955-1956	T	G U.K. (F.I.D.S.)*
Flint	2	1500	1964-1965		G U.K. (B.T.O.)†
Elliott (C.C.H.)	1	500	1968		G U.K. (B.T.O.)
Fairall & Shaughnessy	3	12	1973		G South Africa
Richardson	1	91	1974	T	G South Africa
Bester	1	22	1976		G South Africa
Voisin	1	5	1977		G South Africa
Bester	N.A.	N.A.	1977-1978		G South Africa

\* Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey; † British Trust for Ornithology; N.A. Not available at present.

Table 2  
Recoveries of birds ringed at Gough Island (40°20'S, 10°00'W) 1937-1977

Species	Ring no.	Age at ringing	Sex	Ringing date	Recovery date	Recovery location	Status
Wandering Albatross	50105	Adult	♂	22.12.55	1.6.59	Port Elizabeth, S. Africa 33°58'S, 25°36'E	No details <sup>1</sup>
Great Shearwater	SS 85029	Pullus	—	4.5.68	10.6.70	Off Penguin Islands, Newfoundland 47°25'N, 57°00'W	Dead — caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>
Great Shearwater	SS 85133	Pullus	—	7.5.68	24.8.69	At sea, SE of Newfoundland 45°13'N, 53°29'W	Dead — caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>
Great Shearwater	SS 85157	Pullus	—	8.5.68	8.9.70	Cape Freels, Newfoundland 49°13'N, 53°29'W	Dead — caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>
Great Shearwater	SS 85236	Pullus	—	9.5.68	26.6.69	Atlantic Ocean south of Massachusetts, U.S.A. 40°50'N, 70°31'W	Dead — caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>
Great Shearwater	SS 85264	Pullus	—	10.5.68	20.6.71	Placentia Bay, Newfoundland c. 47°00'N, 55°00'W	Dead — caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hudson (1963); <sup>2</sup>British Trust for Ornithology records.

Table 3  
Birds ringed at the Tristan da Cunha Island Group 1937-1977

Species	Island	1937	1948	1951	1952	1955	1964	1968	1973	1974	1976	1977	Total
Rockhopper Penguin <i>Endiptes chrysocome</i>	T I N G	437 95 — —	— — — —	— — — —	57 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	494 95 — —
Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —
Yellow-nosed Albatross <i>Diomedea chlororhynchos</i>	T I N G	26 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	26 — — 1644
Sooty Albatross <i>Phoebastria fusca</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	4 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	86 — — 9
Northern Giant Petrel <i>Macronectes halli</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 5
Broad-billed Prion <i>Pachyptila vittata</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	1 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	1 — — 25
Soft-plumaged Petrel <i>Pterodroma mollis</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 1
Grey Petrel <i>Procellaria cinerea</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	3 — — —	1 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	4 — — —
Great Shearwater <i>Puffinus gravis</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 1613
White-bellied Storm Petrel <i>Fregata grallaria</i>	T I N G	8(1) — — —	2 — — —	300 — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	500 — — 2
Great Skua <i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 1
Tristan Thrush <i>Nesocichla eremita</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 107
Tristan Bunting <i>Nesospiza acunhae</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 4
Purple Gallinule <i>Porphyryla martinica</i>	T I N G	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — —	— — — 2
													4873

T = Tristan da Cunha, I = Inaccessible Island, N = Nightingale Island, G = Gough Island.

Table 4  
Recoveries of Yellow-nosed Albatrosses ringed at Nightingale Island (37°28'S, 12°32'W) 1937-1977

Ring no.	Age	Sex	Ring date	Recovery date	Recovery location	Status
1921	Pullus	—	1.2.38	October 1938	24 km North of Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°06'S, 12°09'E	Killed <sup>1</sup>
1824	Pullus	—	3.2.38	17.4.38	64 km South of Walvis Bay, South Africa c. 23°30'S, 14°25'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1814	Pullus	—	3.2.38	20.4.38	off Porto Alexandre, Angola c. 15°49'S, 11°53'E	Killed for food <sup>2</sup>
1553	Pullus	—	3.2.38	24.4.38	16 km off west coast of Africa at latitude 24°S i.e. 24°00'S, 14°25'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1666	Pullus	—	3.2.38	June 1938	Baía dos Tigres, Angola 16°36'S, 11°43'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1531	Pullus	—	3.2.38	25.8.38	off Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1715	Pullus	—	1.2.38	25.8.38	off Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1875	Pullus	—	1.2.38	25.8.38	off Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1784	Pullus	—	1.2.38	20.9.38	Porto Alexandre, Angola c. 15°49'S, 11°53'E	Killed for food <sup>1</sup>
1894	Pullus	—	1.2.38	17.10.38	Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Ring removed, released <sup>1</sup>
1888	Pullus	—	1.2.38	1.11.38	Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Ring removed, released <sup>1</sup>
1704	Pullus	—	1.2.38	3.11.38	Moçâmedes, Angola c. 15°10'S, 12°09'E	Ring removed, released <sup>1</sup>
1048039	Adult	—	18.9.64	1.11.66	off Walvis Bay, South Africa 22°54'S, 14°25'E	No details <sup>2</sup>
1048098	Adult	—	18.9.64	30.6.65	off Walvis Bay, South Africa 22°54'S, 14°25'E	Controlled <sup>2</sup>
5019995	Adult	—	16.9.64	7.5.71	off South West Africa 20°15'S, 12°10'E	Ring removed, released <sup>2</sup>
5019931	Adult	—	15.9.64	20.8.68	At sea, mid South Atlantic 30°00'S, 7°30'W	No details <sup>2</sup>
5019666	Adult	—	15.9.64	25.7.72	At sea, off South West Africa 20°05'S, 12°44'E	Dead—caught in fishing gear <sup>2</sup>
1048391	Adult	—	18.9.64	June 1972	At sea, off South West Africa c. 20°50'S, 12°30'E	Caught on trawler, presumed dead <sup>2</sup>
5019571	Adult	—	13.9.64	29.9.67	Rocky Point, South West Africa c. 19°00'S, 12°30'E	Found dead <sup>2</sup>
1049242	Adult	—	18.9.64	8.2.67	At sea, SW of Walvis Bay, South Africa 24°09'S, 13°40'E	Controlled, Hiddensee 202858 added <sup>2</sup>
5019547	Adult	—	13.9.64	5.11.67	Saldanha Bay, South Africa 33°00'S, 17°56'E	Found dead <sup>2</sup>
1048364	Adult	—	18.9.64	23.9.72	At sea, off South West Africa 21°00'S, 13°00'E	Caught on fishing boat, presumed dead <sup>2</sup>
1048174	Adult	—	18.9.64	24.5.72	At sea, off Haub River Mouth, South West Africa c. 21°10'S, 12°50'E	Captured, presumed dead <sup>2</sup>
1048119	Adult	—	18.9.64	29.7.71	South Atlantic, off Lüderitz, South West Africa 26°15'S, 14°10'E	Shot <sup>2</sup>
1048112	Adult	—	18.9.64	29.4.72	At sea, off South West Africa 19°30'S, 11°50'E	Ring removed, released <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hagen (1952); <sup>2</sup>British Trust for Ornithology records.

Table 5  
Recoveries of Great Shearwaters ringed at Nightingale Island (37°28'S, 12°32'W) 1937-1977

Ring no.	Age	Sex	Ring date	Recovery date	Recovery location	Status
1100	Adult	—	6.2.38	15.6.38	off east coast of Newfoundland c. 50°00'N, 54°00'W	Presumed dead <sup>1</sup>
967	Adult	—	31.1.38	20.6.38	off east coast of Newfoundland 45°48'N, 50°00'W	Presumed dead <sup>1</sup>
1288	Adult	—	10.2.38	4.8.38	"Little Heliefiskebank" off west coast of Greenland 65°00'N, 53°40'W	Presumed dead <sup>1</sup>
1038	Adult	—	6.2.38	—	No information as to position and date of recovery. Reported in letter dated 8.2.40 from G. Holdansen, Vestmanna, Faroe Islands <sup>1</sup>	
1251	Adult	—	10.2.38	1940	Coast near George, Cape Province, South Africa c. 34°4'S, 22°27'E	Dead <sup>1</sup>
SS 19251	Adult	—	18.9.65	12.7.66	Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland c. 49°00'N, 53°30'W	Killed <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hagen (1952); <sup>2</sup>British Trust for Ornithology records

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## Bird ringing on Marion Island, 1975 - 1977

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This paper summarises ringing activities on Marion Island between May 1975 and May 1977. Totals of 1119 birds and 21 species were ringed during this period (Table 2). Ringing done in previous years was described by Berruti *et al.* (1975).

Sixteen foreign-ringed birds were recovered or controlled (released alive) on Marion Island during the two years under review (Table 1). To date, 12 King Penguins, *Aptenodytes patagonicus*, ringed on Possession Island, Îles Crozet (46°25'S, 51°45'E) have been found on Marion Island, all within two years of having been ringed. Eleven of these birds were moulting (one found dead) and one was found breeding (with a chick). In addition, a Wandering Albatross, *Diomedea exulans*, BS 0777, ringed as a pullus on Possession Island, was found breeding on Marion Island. A certain amount of

interbreeding thus occurs between the Wandering Albatross populations, and possibly the King Penguin populations, of Marion and Possession Islands. The data in Table 2 also confirm that some Wandering Albatrosses hatched or breeding on Marion Island frequent Australian coastal waters, perhaps less so than those from South Georgia (Tickell & Gibson, 1968).

Apart from the 10 birds reported by Berruti *et al.* (1975), no other birds ringed on Marion Island have been reported elsewhere. Two hundred and forty birds ringed on Marion Island prior to May 1975 were subsequently recovered there, including a Wandering Albatross ringed 23 years previously (Table 3). In 1974, 17 Northern Giant Petrels, *Macronectes halli*, were ringed, all breeding adults. Two years later,

Table 1

Recoveries of foreign ringed birds recovered on Marion and Prince Edward Islands, 1976-1977

Species	Ring no.	Age at ringing	Sex	Ringing date	Recovery date	Ringing location	Status
Wandering Albatross	BS 0777	Pullus	—	18.9.68	19.1.77	Possession Island, Crozets 46°25'S, 51°45'E	Controlled, breeding
Wandering Albatross	BS 6654	Adult	—	25.1.68	12.2.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, non-breeding
Wandering Albatross	BS 5815	Adult	♂	12.3.73	20.2.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, non-breeding
Wandering Albatross	BS 5802	Pullus	—	26.2.73	22.2.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, non-breeding
Wandering Albatross	140-39057	Adult	♀	18.9.71	22.2.77	Off New South Wales 33°58'S, 151°16'E	Controlled, breeding
Wandering Albatross	140-25756	Adult	♂	1.8.65	22.2.77	Off New South Wales 33°58'S, 151°16'E	Controlled, breeding
Wandering Albatross	140-35105	Adult	—	1.8.71	12.12.76	Off New South Wales 34°18'S, 150°58'E	Controlled, breeding
Wandering Albatross	140-39256	Adult	—	10.8.69	28.12.76	Off New South Wales 33°58'S, 151°20'E	Controlled, breeding
Wandering Albatross	140-39430	Adult	—	4.8.73	28.7.76	Off New South Wales 34°18'S, 150°58'E	Controlled, breeding
King Penguin	TA 2951	Adult	—	25.1.76	11.1.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Found dead
King Penguin	TA 2381	Pullus	—	17.12.75	7.1.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, moulting
King Penguin	TA 2637	Adult	—	21.12.75	7.1.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, moulting
King Penguin	TA 2521	Pullus	—	8.12.75	11.1.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, moulting
King Penguin	TA 2163	Adult	—	9.2.75	30.11.76	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, moulting
King Penguin	TA 2575	Pullus	—	17.12.75	19.12.76	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, moulting
King Penguin	TA 4465	Adult	—	17.11.76	15.7.77	Possession Island, Crozets	Controlled, breeding (& chick)