



Afrotropical Bird Biology  
Journal of the Natural History of African Birds

Volume 2

## Notes on the seabirds of Gough Island and at sea between Gough and Cape Town, March–June 2021

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### Abstract

Relatively little has been reported about the seabirds of Gough Island, central South Atlantic Ocean, from autumn and winter. We report ad hoc observations on the abundance, phenology and moult of seabirds at Gough Island from March to June 2021, and during the voyages between the island and Cape Town, South Africa. At least 43 species of seabirds were recorded: 1 penguin, 8 albatrosses, 5 southern and 1 northern storm petrel, 22 petrels and shearwaters, 1 gannet, 3 terns and 2 skuas. The results are presented as an annotated species list as well as a daily log of species for the voyages to and from the island. More species were seen per day at sea in June than in March, but fewer individuals were recorded in oceanic waters, mainly due to the large numbers of Great Shearwaters *Ardenna gravis* in March.

**Keywords:** marine birds; pelagic; phenology; moult; Tristan da Cunha  
Received: 18 June 2021; Accepted: 8 February 2022

### Introduction

Gough Island (40°S, 10°W) is one of the world's great seabird islands. Although it lacks any endemic seabirds, it is home to the vast majority of Tristan Albatrosses *Diomedea dabbenena*, Macgillivray's Prions *Pachyptila macgillivrayi* and Atlantic Petrels *Pterodroma incerta*, and together with the nearby Tristan da Cunha archipelago (37° S, 12°W), is the only breeding site for Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* and almost all Great Shearwaters *Ardenna gravis* (Ryan 2007, 2020). Predation by introduced House Mice *Mus musculus* has reduced the populations of many species (Ryan 2010, Dilley et al. 2015), but the island still supports at least 4 million breeding pairs of seabirds (Caravaggi et al. 2019).

Gough Island forms part of the UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha, and is recognized, together with Inaccessible Island, as a UNESCO natural World Heritage Site. It lacks a permanent human population, but a South African weather and research station is staffed year-round, and serviced once a year in spring. Although field teams have been placed on the island year round since 2000, most published ornithological observations have been made in spring and summer (Elliott 1957, Swales 1965, Clancey 1981, Richardson 1984). We visited Gough Island from 10 March to 9 June 2021 as part of the Gough Island Restoration Programme, which is attempting to eradicate mice from the island. Although our primary role was to help establish captive populations of the island's two endemic land birds, Gough Moorhen *Gallinula comeri* and Gough Finch *Rowettia goughensis*, we also made ad hoc observations on the island's seabirds, including their abundance and phenology at this relatively under-reported time of year. In this paper we summarize these

observations, as well as observations of seabirds at sea *en route* to and from Gough Island from Cape Town, South Africa (excluding coastal species seen off Cape Town).

### Methods

We left Cape Town on the afternoon of 2 March 2021 aboard the yacht *Pelagic Australis* and arrived at Gough on the morning of 10 March 2021. The yacht initially followed a northerly route, heading only slightly south of west from Cape Town (34°S, 18°E), before heading south-southwest to Gough from 36°S, 2°W on 7 March. While on Gough we made ad hoc observations of seabirds both ashore and offshore. Sea watches from the research station in Transvaal Bay were made using binoculars and a 30x spotting scope. The MV *Edinburgh* fished for rock lobster *Jasus tristani* around the island from 15 April to 4 May, attracting large numbers of giant petrels, Tristan Albatrosses and other seabirds once the vessel anchored in the afternoon to process the day's catch (visible from the research station on 29 April and 3 May). Particular effort was made to see as many birds as possible from shore on 8 May for World Migratory Bird Day.

We left the island on the SA *Agulhas II*, joining the vessel on the morning of 6 June 2021. The ship then spent several days offloading cargo, during which time we were able to observe seabirds in the island's coastal waters, before we left the island for Cape Town on the morning of 9 June. We docked in Cape Town on the evening of 13 June 2021. Approximate noon positions (local time) of the *Pelagic Australis* and the SA *Agulhas II* are given in Appendix 1.

Observations at sea were opportunistic, but we were on deck much of the time on both voyages. A rough estimate of

relative abundance is given in Table 1. Identification of birds at sea was assisted by photographs with a Canon R6 fitted with a 500 mm f4 lens or an 800 mm f11 lens. This proved invaluable to identify prions *Pachyptila* spp. and the two *Fregetta* storm petrels that breed on Tristan and Gough (Robertson et al. 2016; Ryan 2017). Individuals of these genera that were not photographed were treated as unidentified. Species names follow the IOC list ([www.worldbirdnames.org](http://www.worldbirdnames.org)), although we recognize Macgillivray's Prion *Pachyptila macgillivrayi* as a distinct species (Ryan et al. 2014, [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)).

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 lists all species seen each day on the voyages between Cape Town and Gough Island, as well as species seen offshore from the island. At least 43 species of seabirds were recorded: 1 penguin, 8 albatrosses, 5 southern and 1 northern storm petrel, 22 petrels and shearwaters, 1 gannet, 3 terns and 2 skuas (Table 1). The number of species seen per day at sea ranged from 5 to 25, with the largest number of species seen immediately adjacent to Gough Island (Table 1). More species were seen per day at sea in June (12–14 species) than in March (5–11), but in general fewer individuals were recorded. We were expecting more birds to be seen in winter, when there is an influx of more southerly-breeding species to the shelf waters off the Cape. However, if anything fewer birds were seen in June, given the absence of Great Shearwaters compared to March. Only a few southern species were seen on the return voyage (Antarctic and Slender-billed prions, Cape Petrels and one Grey-headed Albatross). Excluding the day when we arrived at or left Gough Island, we observed 23 species on the voyage to the island in March and 27 on the return voyage in June (Table 1). The following annotated species list provides additional information on timing of presence on Gough and observations of birds in moult.

### Northern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes moseleyi*

Common breeding visitor. Adult penguins were moulting when we arrived on Gough in March 2021. Most had departed the island by mid-April, but one straggler remained at Seal Beach until at least 13 May. The only Rockhopper Penguins seen at sea were close to Gough Island on 10 March (Table 1).

### Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena*

Common breeding visitor. Gough supports virtually the entire population of this species, which breeds in the highlands above about 400 m elevation. Reliable separation from Wandering Albatross *D. exulans* at sea is not possible, but birds close to Gough most likely were this species. Adults were incubating on arrival in March, with eggs hatching from mid-March to early April. Chicks were first seen alone on 7 April. Non-breeders were present in colonies throughout, but their numbers and the intensity of displaying decreased through late April-May. Adults use ridge soaring to gain altitude, mainly on the windward side of the island, but they also occasionally soar in 'kettles' in calm

conditions. Large roosts formed on the sea off Saddle Island (n=92 birds) and Rockhopper Point (n=122) during particularly calm weather on 1 April, waiting for the wind to increase to assist with ridge soaring.

### Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*

Rare non-breeding visitor. One photographed c. 50 miles east of Gough on 9 June.

### Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*

Common breeding visitor. Adults were provisioning large chicks on arrival in March. Most chicks fledged in May, during which month adults became increasingly uncommon over the island and offshore. However, some adults remained at sea around the island until our departure on 9 June. An immature bird with a pronounced whitish hindneck collar was seen from the island on 30 April. The first bird on the way to Gough was seen on 7 March 2021 at 35.5°S, 0.7°W, with small numbers thereafter. In June, they occurred east to 35.8°S, 10.4°E.

### Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

Fairly common non-breeding visitor. Only seen from Gough Island during the visit of the *Edinburgh*, when an adult was seen scavenging behind the ship on 3 May. Another was seen from the *SA Agulhas II* while anchoring off the island on 9 June. Sporadic in small numbers in oceanic waters, often following the ship for up to several hours. Both adults and immature birds were seen. Abundant along the continental shelf break in June, where some adults were moulting their primaries.

### Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

Rare non-breeding visitor to Gough; only seen close to the Cape on the voyage out to Gough in March, but one followed the ship at 36.9°S 3.6°E during the return to Cape Town late on 11 June (Table 1). Most adults off the Cape were in heavy moult in June.

### Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*

Uncommon to rare non-breeding visitor to Gough, mainly in winter. One juvenile briefly followed the ship at 36.9°S 3.5°E on 11 June (Table 1).

### Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*

Common breeding visitor. Adults were provisioning large chicks on our arrival at Gough in March. Fledglings started to leave the island in early April, often harassed by Brown Skuas and giant petrels on their inaugural flights. Most had fledged by mid-April, although a few stragglers remained until early May; the last one seen was killed by giant petrels at sea just off the research station on 7 May. Adults became increasingly uncommon offshore during the first half of April, and apart from one adult seen from the ship off Gough on 9 June, none was seen until 37.4°S 3.6°E on 11 June during

Table 1. Seabirds seen each day on voyages to and from Gough Island from Cape Town in March and June 2021. A=abundant (&gt;100 per day), C=common (21-100), U=uncommon (5-20); counts given for &lt;5 birds seen per day.

Species	March										Gough Island	June					n days
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	9		10	11	12	13		
Northern Rockhopper Penguin										C	C						1
Tristan Albatross*								2	C	A	C	1			1		5
Southern Royal Albatross											1						1
Sooty Albatross						1	1	2	C	C	U	U	1	2			8
Black-browed Albatross				1				1		2	2	2	3	U	A		7
Shy Albatross	U	2											1		C		4
Grey-headed Albatross													1				1
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross		U	2	1	U	U	U	U	C	C	1		U	4	U		12
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross							1										1
Wilson's Storm Petrel	C		1							2						C	3
Grey-backed Storm Petrel												C					1
White-faced Storm Petrel										U							0
Black-bellied Storm Petrel									U	C	C	C					3
White-bellied Storm Petrel				1			1										2
Unidentified <i>Fregetta</i> storm petrels			1					1							1		3
Leach's Storm Petrel		C		U													2
Southern Giant Petrel										C	C	C			1		3
Northern Giant Petrel										2	U	3					2
Unidentified giant petrels													1	1	2		3
Southern Fulmar											2						0
Cape (Pintado) Petrel										U	3		1		C		3
Blue Petrel												1					1
Broad-billed Prion								C	A	C	U	A					4
Macgillivray's Prion										?	1	2					2
Antarctic Prion											C	U		U	A		4
Slender-billed Prion												1					1

Table 1 continued

Species	March									Gough Island	June					n days
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		9	10	11	12	13	
Unidentified prions												2			1	
Kerguelen Petrel										C	C	1			2	
Great-winged Petrel		U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	1	12	
Atlantic Petrel										A	C	1			2	
Soft-plumaged Petrel							1	C	C	A	A	C	C	C	7	
Grey Petrel									2	A	A	1			3	
White-chinned Petrel	C		1	1	1	1		U	1			2	U	U	A	11
Spectacled Petrel			2	U	U	U	U	C		U	C		2	2		9
Cory's Shearwater	U	U	1				2									4
Sooty Shearwater	C									U					C	2
Great Shearwater	A	C	C	U	U	U	U	C	A	A						9
Manx Shearwater	1															1
Subantarctic Shearwater									C	C	C	U				3
Common Diving Petrel										U	3					1
Cape Gannet	C														C	2
Brown Noddy									U	C						1
Arctic Tern		2													U	2
Antarctic Tern									C	C	U					2
Brown Skua							2		U	C	U	2			4	5
Long-tailed Skua		2		1												2
Number of species per day	8	8	8	9	5	8	9	11	17	27	25	14	12	12	12	

\*may include some Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans*

our voyage to Cape Town, whereafter they were the commonest albatross in oceanic waters (Table 1).

#### Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri*

Rare non-breeding visitor. The only one seen was an adult photographed at 35.4°S, 0.5°W on 7 March 2021 (Fig. 1).

#### Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Fairly common non-breeding visitor. Common off the Cape, but scarce in oceanic waters, where it is easily overlooked; only one was seen away from the Cape on the voyage to Gough in March, and none was seen in oceanic waters on the return voyage (Table 1). However, at least two were seen from shore off Seal Beach on 8 May.

#### Grey-backed Storm Petrel *Garrodia nereis*

Formerly a common breeding visitor, but increasingly scarce presumably due to mouse predation. None was seen on the voyage to Gough, or during sea watches from the island, but they were quite common off the island when we were offloading cargo from the SA *Agulhas II* in early June, and were the commonest storm petrel as we sailed east from Gough on 9 June. None of the birds photographed was moulting flight feathers.

#### White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*

Fairly common breeding visitor. None was seen on the voyages to and from Gough, or at night around the research station, where they are fairly common in spring and early summer. The only sightings were of some 10 birds at sea in Transvaal Bay on 8 May.

#### Black-bellied Storm Petrel *Fregetta tropica*

Fairly common breeding visitor. The status of *Fregetta* storm petrels at Tristan and Gough needs further research, but it is thought that only the white-bellied form of this species, *F. t. melanoleuca*, breeds at Gough, whereas both this species and the White-bellied Storm Petrel *F. g. leucogaster* breed at Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands in the Tristan archipelago (Robertson et al., 2016; Ryan 2017). With good images, the two can be separated fairly reliably (Ryan 2017). All photographs of birds off Gough (and within a day's sailing of the island) were this species (Fig. 2). None was seen ashore at night, but it was fairly common offshore throughout our visit. None of the birds photographed was moulting flight feathers.

#### White-bellied Storm Petrel *Fregetta grallaria*

The status of this species at Gough needs clarification, but in the absence of definite evidence to the contrary it is best to assume that it does not breed at Gough. Birds showing the characteristics of this species were photographed on 5 and 7 March during the voyage to Gough (Fig. 2), in warmer waters than where we later encountered Black-bellied Storm Petrels. Neither was moulting its flight feathers. The only *Fregetta* seen on the return voyage, late on the afternoon of 12 June, also appeared to be this species, but it was not photographed.

#### Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Uncommon non-breeding summer visitor to Gough waters, becoming more common farther east. Flocks of up to 20 birds were encountered in oceanic waters off the Cape in early March (Table 1). All those photographed were in fresh plumage, having completed their wing and tail moult.



Fig. 1. The Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross photographed at 35.4°S, 0.5°W on 7 March 2021.



Fig. 2. Comparison between a white-bellied Black-bellied Storm Petrel *F. t. melanoleuca* photographed off Gough Island on 9 June 2021 (left two images) and two White-bellied Storm Petrels *F. g. leucogaster* photographed at 35.4°S, 0.1°W on 7 March 2021. Note the plainer brown back, more prominent nostrils, longer toes and more extensive black chest of the former, which appears to be moulting its upper tail coverts as the white rump patch is unusually narrow. The White-bellied Storm Petrels show dark smudges in the rump and lower belly which are typical of this taxon.

#### Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*

Common breeding visitor and resident; scarce away from the island. Chicks fledge in January, but adults remain at the island year round, with up to 325 seen at the Low Hump colony and 170 at the colony in GP Valley in May. Birds regularly patrol the coast of Gough, and gather in small flocks at sea just offshore. Up to 50 scavenged discards from the MV *Edinburgh*. No birds were observed to be moulting primaries. The only giant petrel photographed at sea was a young Southern Giant Petrel on 12 June.

#### Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*

Fairly common non-breeding visitor. Often found among groups of Southern Giant Petrels around the coast of Gough. Most are adults, but a few juveniles also occur. Not recorded ashore. One adult photographed off the island on 9 June was just completing its primary moult.

#### Giant petrel *Macronectes* sp.

Distant giant petrels at sea could not be identified reliably to species. One giant petrel came to scavenge from galley wastes dumped overboard at 36.9°S 3.6°E during the return to Cape Town on 11 June (Table 1). Another bird on 12 June was thought to be a Northern Giant Petrel, but this was not confirmed by photographs. Two more were seen in the trawl grounds over the shelf break off Cape Town on the return voyage.

#### Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor, mainly in winter. Two birds were foraging for scraps at the MV *Edinburgh* on 3 May, and one was seen among a raft of Great Shearwaters offshore on 4 May.

#### Cape (Pintado) Petrel *Daption capense*

Fairly common non-breeding visitor. Five birds were seen feeding behind the MV *Edinburgh* on 29 April, and two on 3 May. Two were also seen while sea-watching on 8 May. Up to 3 accompanied the SA *Agulhas II* on her departure from Gough on 9 June, and were seen sporadically thereafter *en route* to the Cape, where they were common in the trawl grounds over the shelf break.

#### Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*

Uncommon breeding visitor, only known on Gough Island from a small area on the coastal slope below Low Hump (Ryan et al. 2015). The colony was visited 10 times from late April to the end of May, with Blue Petrels calling in response to imitations of their calls on the first three visits (25 April and 10-11 May), but not on 14 May or any subsequent visit, suggesting that their post-moult visit to the colony ends around the 10 May. Only one bird was seen at sea c. 40 miles east of Gough on 9 June; it was not in moult.

### Broad-billed Prion *Pachyptila vittata*

Abundant breeding visitor. On the voyage to Gough in March, prions were only observed on the day before and on the morning of arrival; all those photographed were of this species. None was moulting, which is consistent with them completing their moult by the end of February (Jones et al. 2020). Many of the flocks seen on 9 March were sitting on the water feeding; photographs show water being pumped through their filtering lamellae (Fig. 3). At Gough, they were commonly heard and seen ashore at night, but their presence fluctuated sporadically, perhaps linked to the passage of fronts over the island (Mendelsohn 1979). They were scarce east of Gough on 9 June, but were the most abundant prion on 10 June, among mixed-species flocks of 20-50 individuals regularly encountered throughout the day.

### Macgillivray's Prion *Pachyptila macgillivrayi*

Abundant breeding visitor. This species was long overlooked at Gough because it is scarce around the research station (Ryan et al. 2014). Birds were photographed at night in Gonydale on 14 March and on 28 May. These individuals were not in moult, despite both dates falling within the core adult moult period (Jones et al. 2020). Others were found in Prion Cave on 8 May and 1 June. Single birds photographed at sea on 9 and 10 June east of Gough also appear to be this species; they were not in moult.

### Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*

Common non-breeding visitor. Most of the prions photographed off Gough as we left the island on 9 June

were this species, as were at least some on 10 June and all birds on 12 June. It was most common off the Cape on 13 June, with large flocks close inshore off Hout Bay; none of those photographed was in moult.

### Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor. Only one record; a bird photographed with an Antarctic Prion c. 40 miles east of Gough on 9 June; it was not in moult.

### Kerguelen Petrel *Aphrodroma brevirostris*

Common summer breeding visitor. Not seen at sea on the way to Gough, and only seen offshore from the island during onshore winds from 13 May onwards but heard calling in Gonydale on numerous nights from 19 March until late May, indicating that after their post-breeding moult many birds return to their colonies at night. Common offshore on leaving the island on 9 June, but only one was seen the following day and none thereafter (Table 1).

### Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*

Fairly common breeding visitor. After Great Shearwater, it typically was the next most abundant species on most days travelling to the island in March, when all birds were in fresh plumage, having completed their pre-breeding moult. Seldom seen from the shore on Gough, but occasional in small numbers in April and May, and more common at sea while anchored off the east coast of the island in early June. It was less common at sea on the return voyage to Cape Town in June, being greatly outnumbered by Soft-plumaged Petrels (Table 1).



Fig. 3. A Broad-billed Prion feeding by pumping water through its bill lamellae to strain out copepods northeast of RSA Sea Mount on 9 March 2021.

*Atlantic Petrel Pterodroma incerta*

Abundant breeding visitor. None were seen on the voyage to Gough Island in March, but the first birds were recorded on the island at night on 12 March. From the end of March, vast numbers came ashore each evening at dusk, with only a few coming in once it was fully dark. It was fairly common east of Gough on 9 June, but only one was seen the following day and none thereafter (Table 1). None was in moult.

*Soft-plumaged Petrel Pterodroma mollis*

Abundant breeding visitor. Together with Great Shearwaters and prions, the most abundant bird seen and heard at night around the research station, but unlike Atlantic Petrels they very seldom venture ashore until it is fully dark. Typically seen offshore during the day, approaching the island more closely during onshore winds. The chicks fledge throughout May and into early June, but adults remained common at the island throughout our stay. It was the most common bird in oceanic waters during the return journey from Gough to Cape Town in June.

*Grey Petrel Procellaria cinerea*

Common breeding visitor, mainly above 350 m elevation. Some birds commute to and from their nests during the day, but numbers increase towards dusk. They were only seen within one day's travel from the island, and none was in moult.

*White-chinned Petrel Procellaria aequinoctialis*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor. Common at sea off Cape Town, but becoming progressively scarcer offshore in March. Some birds were already starting to moult inner primaries on 2 March. None was seen from the island, but they were regular in small numbers following the ship on the return voyage in June. Some birds in oceanic waters in June were in heavy primary moult, but most were not, suggesting that they were immature birds, as most adults are in the middle of primary moult in June (PGR unpubl. data). Abundant on the trawl grounds off the Cape on 13 June, where many were moulting.

*Spectacled Petrel Procellaria conspicillata*

Common non-breeding visitor. Regularly followed the yacht on the way to Gough in March; less common on the return voyage to Cape Town in June. Fairly common offshore from Gough, and occasionally flying over the island, especially from mid-April to mid-May. Previous field workers on Gough have reported Spectacled Petrels flying over the island in April (D. Fox and C. Taylor, pers. comm.), possibly exploring for new breeding sites as the population on Inaccessible Island continues to expand (Ryan et al. 2019). However, it is unclear why such prospecting would not occur earlier in the year, as the species lays in late October (Ryan 2007). A few

birds had started moulting their inner primaries in early March, but most had not yet started to moult. However, a few birds (presumably immatures) were completing primary moult in early March.

*Cory's Shearwater Calonectris borealis*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor. Mostly seen off the Cape, but two were seen around 36.8°S, 2.5°W on 8 March. None was seen to be moulting.

*Sooty Shearwater Ardenna grisea*

Fairly common non-breeding visitor. At sea, only seen close to the Cape, but several were observed from Gough Island on 3 April and 8 May. It is conceivable that small numbers breed on Gough, among the vast colonies of Great Shearwaters, given the species' occasional breeding at the main island of Tristan da Cunha (Ryan 2007).

*Great Shearwater Ardenna gravis*

Abundant breeding visitor and by far the most common bird at sea on the voyage to Gough in early March. Breeding burrows are largely confined to coastal tussock grassland (Ryan 2007). Some adults visit colonies during the day to feed chicks, but most come ashore at dusk or after dark. Numbers started to dwindle from late April, and they were not seen offshore after mid-May, although a few fledglings were still on the island until at least 31 May. None was seen to be moulting flight feathers.

*Manx Shearwater Puffinus puffinus*

Rare non-breeding visitor in summer to Tristan waters, but regular in coastal waters off South Africa. Only one seen c. 20 miles west of Cape Town on 2 March 2021.

*Subantarctic Shearwater Puffinus elegans*

Fairly common breeding visitor. Formerly quite common around the research station at night, but now very rare, although commonly seen offshore. Small numbers were seen in sea watches in March and April but became increasingly common from mid-May. They were only seen close to Gough on the voyage to the island in March, but small numbers were seen farther east on the return voyage in June (Table 1). None was seen to be moulting flight feathers.

*Common Diving Petrel Pelecanoides urinatrix*

Common breeding visitor. None was seen on the voyage to Gough in March and seldom seen from the island, but fairly regularly heard and seen ashore at night around the research station through late April and May. One was heard calling at night in Gonydale on 4 May. Common at sea west of South Point on 8 June, but only a few were seen on leaving the island on 9 June and none thereafter.



### Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*

Only seen close to the Cape, but with one well off the shelf edge at 34.4°S 16.6°E on 13 June.

### Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

Fairly common breeding visitor. Regularly seen commuting inland to nesting and roosting sites in large *Phylica arborea* trees during March and early April, becoming increasingly scarce towards the end of April although a few stragglers were seen until 18 May. None was seen to be in moult.

### Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor to Gough; more common farther east towards the Cape. Only two were seen on the second day out of Cape Town in March, but several small groups were seen on 13 June (Table 1), mostly in oceanic waters beyond the shelf break.

### Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*

Common breeding visitor, mainly along the coast, but also locally inland (e.g. along the river gorge below Gonydale). They remained common along the coast until early May, with some birds remaining until we left the island in June. However, inland birds were not seen after the end of March (although one was seen flying up the Gonydale River on 4 May). Some birds retained full black caps and continued to call and carry fish until at least 21 May. The last confirmed juvenile was seen at the island on 16 May.

### Brown Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus*

Common breeding visitor and resident, mostly found close to the island, but a few birds were seen at sea on the voyage to Gough and back, with most in the trawl grounds off the Cape in June (Table 1). One was seen to chase a Cory's Shearwater at sea northeast of RSA Sea Mount. Some adults commenced moult in late February; one bird photographed on 24 March already had fully grown P1-2, and by 1 April, two birds had fully grown P1-5, with only 2-3 old outer primaries still to be replaced. However, two birds in late March were just growing their inner 2-3 primaries, and others were yet to start moult. At least one bird was only growing its inner primaries in early June.

### Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor to Gough; more common farther east towards the Cape. Only three were seen on two days on the voyage to Gough in March (Table 1).

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## Acknowledgements

We thank our colleagues in the field, especially Amy King and Anton Wolfaardt, for assistance with seabird observations. The captains and crews of the *Pelagic Australis* and *SA Agulhas II* ensured our safe passage to and from Gough Island.

Appendix 1. Approximate noon positions (local time) of the *Pelagic Australis* (March 2021) and *SA Agulhas II* (June 2021).

Date	Pelagic Australis	Date	SA Agulhas II
3 March	33.4°S, 14.5°E	9 June	40.3°S, 9.8°W
4 March	33.2°S, 10.5°E	10 June	38.7°S, 2.5°W
5 March	33.5°S, 6.7°E	11 June	37.2°S, 4.2°E
6 March	34.7°S, 3.9°E	12 June	35.8°S, 10.6°E
7 March	35.4°S, 0.2°W	13 June	34.3°S, 17.1°E
8 March	37.0°S, 4.1°W		
9 March	39.2°S, 7.5°W		

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