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The first record of a Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* for the Mascarene Islands

by D. S. Smith & A. S. Cheke

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The Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* breeds on mainland Australia and the Tasmanian Islands. Most migrate during the non-breeding season to the north Pacific, but there is evidence of some appearing in the northern Indian Ocean between Oman and the Malay Peninsula, possibly displaced by storms (Frith 1978, Colston 1980, Marchant & Higgins 1990). We report here the first record of the species for the Mascarene Islands, south-west Indian Ocean. The bird was found by local people alive on the beach at Riviere Coco, Rodrigues on 5 June 1974. It died shortly afterwards and its remains were passed to ASC on his next visit to the island on 12 July. They were subsequently deposited in The Natural History Museum, Tring, where they are now preserved in the bird skin collection (BMNH reg. no. 1999.30.1.)

Initial identification of the specimen as *P. tenuirostris* has now been confirmed by comparison with skins of this and related species. In particular it is clearly distinguishable from the Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, the most similar species, in having a shorter, stubbier bill and a pale grey underwing. The following measurements (mm) taken from the carcass are also consistent with other *P. tenuirostris* skins: wing 265, tarsus 51, bill 32, middle toe and claw 62. The only other evidence of the occurrence of the species in the south-west Indian Ocean appears to be a recent sight record off the south east coast of South Africa, reported without supporting details by Enticott & Tipling (1997).

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The nest and eggs of *Merops muelleri mentalis*

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Carter & Dickerman (1998) write that their description of the nest and eggs of *Merops muelleri* is the first for the Upper Guinea subspecies *mentalis*. This is not so, because the nest and eggs described by Serle (1954, p. 56) were of this form. It is generally accepted that the division between *mentalis* and the nominate is in SW Cameroon, and not as one might suppose west of the Dahomey Gap. Serle himself looked carefully at specimens before coming to this conclusion (1950, p. 360). This is one of several Upper Guinea birds which has its eastern distribution delimited by the Sanaga river system. But the nest that Carter & Dickerman report from Liberia does seem to be the only one described from Upper Guinea proper.

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