

# Notes

## Long-tailed Skua predation of Wilson's Storm-petrel

In November 2014, we undertook a three-week, yacht-based expedition from central Chile to the Juan Fernández archipelago. On 17th November, we were cruising slowly northwards in the Humboldt Current, about 70 km WNW of Papudo, Chile. There was little breeze and the sea was calm. Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* were common with about 250 seen during the course of the day, some foraging and feeding, others rafting in groups. At about 09.30 hrs we observed a Wilson's Storm-petrel foot-pattering and feeding near to the yacht. A first-summer Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* flew towards the petrel, approaching it from behind and about 1.5 m above the sea surface, and then dived onto it, apparently killing it instantly. The dead storm-petrel floated on its back and the skua proceeded to eat its prey, beginning by plucking feathers from the belly area (plate 315).

Adult Long-tailed Skuas are rodent specialists at the breeding grounds. Typical hunting behaviour might involve hovering some 15–50 m above ground, before diving onto a rodent and pecking it to death (BWP; Malling Olsen & Larsson 1997). They also take smaller prey including passerines and insects. At sea, outside the breeding season, they feed through a mix of kleptoparasitism, surface-seizing and aerial dip-feeding (probably small fish, crustaceans and squid), and scaveng-

ing, including taking offal from behind fishing vessels (Malling Olsen & Larsson 1997; Haven & Lee 1998; Hockey *et al.* 2005). Kleptoparasitism of a wide variety of other seabirds has been observed and includes robbing Wilson's Storm-petrels (Brady 1994). However, we can find no reference to Long-tailed Skuas killing a Wilson's Storm-petrel, although the petrel is predated by the large southern skuas at their breeding grounds.

### Acknowledgments

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### References

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**315.** First-summer Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* and its Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* prey, off Chile, November 2014.

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