

Giant Petrel

In recent years there has been considerable activity on the part of expeditions to the far south in banding Giant Petrels - a large seabird which is commonly seen off the Western Australian coast in the winter months. The bird is often called a Sooty Albatross because of its large size and dark colour. However, it can be easily distinguished from the true Sooty Albatross by its large pale-coloured beak, the beak in the Sooty Albatross being black.

Until the recent banding schemes, naturalists had no idea of the vast extent of the travels of these birds. The first example was of a bird which had been banded as a fledgeling by the Falkland Islands Dependencies' Survey in the South Orkney Islands off Graham Land south of South America, on March 20, 1948. It was caught by fishermen at Fremantle Harbour on July 10 the same year, the bird having made a lengthy circumpolar flight in less than four months. Since then, birds have been marked at Heard and Macquarie Islands by the expeditions of the Antarctic Division of the Department of External Affairs. One bird from Macquarie Island was picked up later at South Georgia and birds from Heard Island have been taken later off Durban, several in Western Australia, some in South Australia, others in New Zealand and others again off Chile and off the Argentine. Generally these birds have been shown to travel in a west to east direction in conformity with the direction of the prevailing winds and ocean currents. However, some birds have been shown to travel in other directions.

One of these has been recently reported in this State. On June 19 this year a Mr. Rennie, of Harvey, when fishing off the Bunbury jetty, caught a Giant Petrel which had a ring on it. Mr. Rennie copied out the number and set the bird free again. By a remarkable coincidence, the bird was caught again by Mr. Fullerton about a month later when fishing off Fremantle. This particular bird had been ringed at Macquarie Island in the autumn of this year.

WILD LIFE SHOWS

The annual exhibition by the Western Australian Naturalists Club and the Gould League of Bird Lovers in

the Perth Town Hall, and by the Australian Inland Mission at Kalgoorlie, again included displays by this Department with Inspector J.E. Munro in charge.

At the Perth Town Hall the Show was again well attended and, it is felt, served a particularly useful purpose in acquainting the public with the value of wild life, not only from the aesthetic, but also from the economic and scientific angles.

In addition to the many large entries that dominated the scene, there were exhibits displayed by one hundred or more small contributors.

The exhibition in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall from September 22 to 25 was reported to have been an even greater success than those of previous years. The marine and faunal specimens exhibited by the Department created great interest and the lecturettes delivered and general information made available by Inspector Munro were again highlights of the show.