

SHORT NOTE

Small skua at Taupo

In May 1982, Michael Morse told me that, during the previous Labour Weekend (October 1981), he and his father had seen and photographed at Kawatau Spit, Western Bays, Lake Taupo, a lightly built skua. They had estimated its body size as about that of a Red-billed Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*), maybe smaller. Its flight was very easy. It tended to glide and float, not like (to use MPM's actual words) "the other skua (Arctic?), which I seem to remember as having a reasonably fast flight. The Taupo skua was feeding on a trout head on a beach, and it was unafraid of us, even though we approached within a metre or so." Clearly, it was exhausted and hungry.

The bird was subsequently identified, on the basis of colour photos, as an immature Long-tailed Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) by its lightweight build, small two-tone bill, generally greyish plumage, pale nape, and distinctive barring on the underwing.

R. B. SIBSON

