

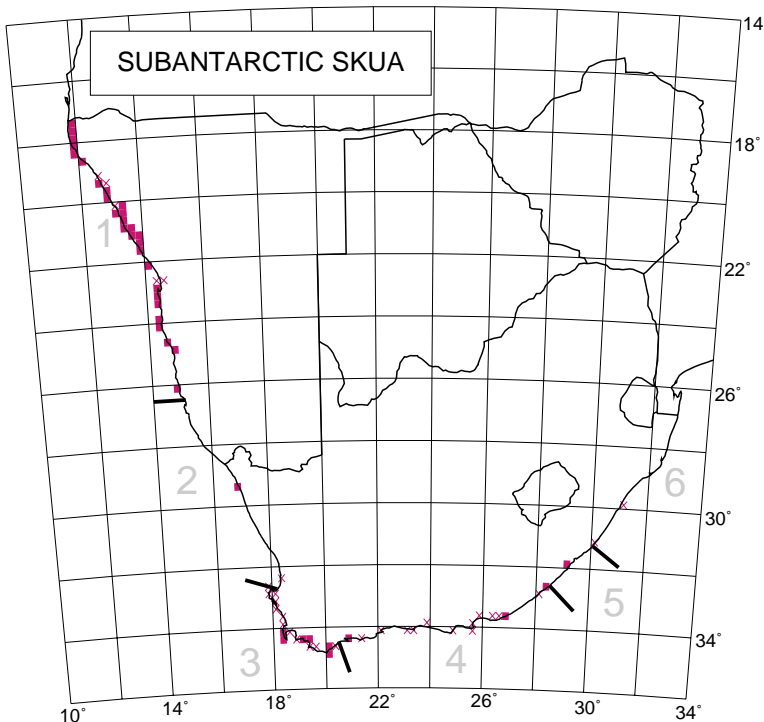
A. CLARKSON.

Subantarctic Skua
 Bruinroofmeeu
Catharacta antarctica

The Subantarctic Skua is a common nonbreeding visitor. It is a circumpolar breeder on subantarctic islands and the Antarctic Peninsula; nonbreeding birds disperse throughout the Southern Ocean (Harrison 1983b). It occurs throughout the region, but is more numerous off the west coast and in the south. The west coast distribution shows a gap between the southwestern Cape Province and northern Namibia which may, at least partially, be due to inadequate coverage.

It is found throughout the waters over the continental shelf, but with the greatest concentrations near the shelf-edge, associated with trawlers. It is scarce in oceanic waters. It regularly occurs close inshore where it is readily observed from the coast. It rarely roosts ashore, and is occasionally seen inland within a few kilometres of the coast (Ryan 1986). Up to 100 skuas may gather to scavenge at trawlers. Most foraging appears to be by seizing prey from the water. Kleptoparasitic behaviour is relatively uncommon, primarily targeting shearwaters and, occasionally, the Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* (Ryan & Rose 1989). It is not known to prey upon small petrels in southern African waters, as is the case at breeding islands (e.g. Ryan & Moloney 1991).

It is present throughout the year off the west and south coasts but is more abundant in winter (Liversidge & Le Gras



Recorded in 67 grid cells, 1.5%
 Total number of records: 253
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.9

1981). There is a tendency for higher reporting rates during autumn, especially in the northern Benguela, which coincides with the dispersal of juveniles from the breeding grounds. Occurrence off the east coast is rather seasonal, with most records from late winter, June–October, associated with the movement of pelagic species along the east coast following schools of Pilchard *Sardinops ocellatus* (the ‘sardine run’). However, there are scattered records from KwaZulu-Natal throughout the year (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Ryan 1986). There have been recoveries along the southern African coastline of Subantarctic Skuas ringed at the Prince Edward and Crozet islands in the southern Indian Ocean, and at South Georgia in the southern Atlantic Ocean (Morant *et al.* 1983; SAFRING).

P.G. Ryan

