



## Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

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| <b>Full Name:</b><br>Nikolas K. Haass, Raja W. Stephenson | Office Use |
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| <b>Species Name:</b><br><b>Barau's Petrel</b> | <b>Scientific Name:</b><br><i>Pterodroma barau</i> |
| Date(s) and time(s) of observation:           | 09/02/2013; 11:36-11:37am                          |
| How long did you watch the bird(s)?           | <1 minute  |
| First and last date of occurrence:            | 09/02/2013   |
| Distance to bird:                             | Down to 30 m                                       |

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| <b>Site Location:</b><br>Deep water ESE of Brown's Mountain near the continental shelf break, approx. 26 nautical miles east-south-east of Sydney Heads, 34° 04' 45" S; 151° 42' 19" E |
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| <b>Habitat:</b><br>Pelagic, deeper water east of Brown's Mountain.   |
| <b>Sighting conditions:</b><br>Sea surface temperature: 26°C; weather: sunny, a bit hazy, clear visibility (see photographs) |
| <b>Optical aids used:</b><br>Leica 12x50 BA (NKH); Canon 7D, Canon 400 mm, f5.6 (RWS)  |

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| <b>To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?</b><br>Barau's Petrel has never been recorded off NSW; in fact, this is the worldwide eastern-most record. A single bird was seen at a similar date off W VIC, 15 <sup>th</sup> February 1987 (CARTER et al. 1989) and another one W of Perth, WA, 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 1987 (reviewed in CARTER et al. 1989; MARCHANT & HIGGINS 1990; PIZZEY & KNIGHT 2007; SIMPSON & DAY 2004). A geolocator-equipped bird has reached WA near Exmouth (PINET et al. 2011). There are other records off WA just outside Australian waters (Phil Hansbro, <a href="http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2002-12/msg00336.html">http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2002-12/msg00336.html</a> ) and at the Kerguelen Plateau (Adrian Boyle, <a href="http://www.pbase.com/wildlifeimages/baraus_petrel">http://www.pbase.com/wildlifeimages/baraus_petrel</a> ). Further sightings were reported from the vicinity of Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island (reviewed in CARTER et al. 1989). Possible Barau's Petrels were seen off VIC in December 2002 (Chris Lester) and May 2003 (Rohan Clarke): <a href="http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2004-07/msg00496.html">http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2004-07/msg00496.html</a> <a href="http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2003-05/msg00226.html">http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus/2003-05/msg00226.html</a> |
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| <b>Did you use a field guide?</b><br>The bird was <i>not</i> spontaneously identified in the field. References used subsequently to identify the bird and to prepare this report were:<br>BRETAGNOLLE, V. & C. ATTIE (1991): Status of Barau's Petrel ( <i>Pterodroma barau</i> ): Colony Sites, Breeding Population and Taxonomic Affinities. <i>Colonial Waterbirds</i> 14: 25-33 • CARTER, M., T. REID & P. LANSLEY (1989): Barau's Petrel <i>Pterodroma barau</i> : A new species for Australia. <i>Australian Bird Watcher</i> 13: 39-43 • CLARKE, R. (2007): An Atlantic Petrel <i>Pterodroma incerta</i> at Sea off Western Victoria. <i>Australian Field Ornithology</i> 24: 1-6 • ENTICOTT, J. & D. TIPLING (1997): Seabirds of the World. London. • HARRISON, P. (1983): Seabirds, an identification guide. Beckenham • HARRISON, P. (1987): Seabirds of the World. A Photographic Guide. London. • HEATHER, B. & H. ROBERTSON (2005, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.): The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand. • HOWELL, S.N.G. (2012): Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America: A Photographic Guide. Princeton. • DEL HOYO, J., A. ELLIOTT & J. SARGATAL (1992): Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 1. - Barcelona. • MARCHANT, S. & P.J. HIGGINS (eds) (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks. Melbourne. • ONLEY, D. & P. SCOFIELD (2007): Albatrosses, Petrels & Shearwaters of the World. Princeton. • PINET, P., M. SALAMOLARD, J.-M. PROBST, J.C. |
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RUSELL, S. JAQUEMET & M. LE CORRE (2009): Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau*: history, biology and conservation of an endangered petrel. *Marine Ornithology* 37: 107–113 • PINET, P., S. JAQUEMET, D. PINAUD, H. WEIMERSKIRCH, R.A. PHILLIPS & M. LE CORRE (2011): Migration, wintering distribution and habitat use of an endangered tropical seabird, Barau's petrel *Pterodroma barau*. *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 423: 291-302 • PIZZEY, G. & F. KNIGHT (2007, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.): The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Sydney. • SHIRIHAI, H. (2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife. London. • SIMPSON, K. & N. DAY (2004, 7<sup>th</sup> ed.): Birds of Australia. Princeton. • STAHL J.-C. & J.A. BARTLE (1991): Distribution, abundance and aspect of the pelagic ecology of Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau* in the south-west Indian Ocean. *Notornis* 38: 211–225 • VAN DEN BERG, A.B., C. SMEENK, C.A.W. BOSMAN, B.J.M. HAASE, A.M. VANDERNIET & G.C. CADÉE (1991) Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau*, Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* and other seabirds in the Northern Indian Ocean in June-July 1984 and 1985. *Ardea* 79: 1-14.

Websites & photographs:

[http://www.pbase.com/wildlifeimages/baraus\\_petrel](http://www.pbase.com/wildlifeimages/baraus_petrel)

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=3900>

<http://seabird.wikispaces.com/Barau's+Petrel>

[http://www.biodiversityexplorer.org/birds/procellariidae/pterodroma\\_baraui.htm](http://www.biodiversityexplorer.org/birds/procellariidae/pterodroma_baraui.htm)

[http://www.barraimaging.com.au/gallery/thumbnails.php?search=barau&submit=search&album=search&title=on&newer\\_than=&caption=on&older\\_than=&keywords=on&type=AND](http://www.barraimaging.com.au/gallery/thumbnails.php?search=barau&submit=search&album=search&title=on&newer_than=&caption=on&older_than=&keywords=on&type=AND)

Further photographs kindly provided by Phil Hansbro and Tony Palliser.

**Were other observers present? Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who?**

Steve Anyon-Smith, Chris Charles, Tony Dawe, Peter Diegutis, Hal Epstein, Robert Hynson, Nevil Lazarus, Roger McGovern, Greg McLachlan, David Mitford, Edwin Vella, Ed Williams. Nobody disagreed with the ID. In addition, Mike Carter, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Dan Mantle, Rob Morris and Paul Walbridge saw the pictures and also agreed with the ID.

**How confident are you of your identification?** e.g. 70%, 100%. If not 100%, why not?  
100%

**Other details:** The circumstances of the sighting were that we were motoring slowly eastwards in deep water after an initial drift at Brown's Mountain and a *Pterodroma* with white underparts appeared. It was first spotted by Steve Anyon-Smith at some distance off the starboard side, when he called it a White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis* based on size and flight style. The bird travelled diagonally across the starboard beam of the Halicat and continued out of view directly behind the boat. This did not provide a lot of opportunity to study the bird as it was in sight for quite a brief period, but it did allow excellent photographic opportunities as it passed by at quite close range of maybe 50 metres (see included photographs by Raja Stephenson, David Mitford, Edwin Vella and Robert Hynson).

### Physical Description of Bird

(1) **Number:** One individual was observed.

(2) **Age, sex:** The immaculate fresh plumage indicates either an immature bird (i.e. 11 months old) or a non-breeder with aberrant moult cycle. Adult birds leave the breeding grounds in March (PINET 2011) and apparently moult their primaries in the wintering grounds (ONLEY & SCOFIELD 2007)

(3) **Size and shape:** Medium-to-large-sized gadfly petrel *Pterodroma*. Distinctly larger and bulkier than a *Cookilaria* petrel, with very long narrow and pointy wings, smallish head, flatter crown, and the long tail held folded. Based on size, shape and flight style the bird was first called a White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis*, but soon also Black-winged *P. nigripennis* and Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera* were discussed, based on underwing pattern and capped appearance, respectively. Indeed, MARCHANT & HIGGINS (1990) describe Barau's Petrel with "general impression of large, elongated, straighter-winged version of *Cookilaria* gadfly petrel."

(4) **Plumage colour and pattern:** Overall appearance greyish-brown-and-white. Contrasting blackish eye-patch (contrast probably enhanced by the strong light; Fig. 1). Blackish-grey cap fading towards and merging with greyish-brown hindneck and saddle (Fig. 2). The capped (rather than hooded) appearance was enhanced by the pale upward notch in the area of the ear coverts, framed by the blackish eye-patch and a short greyish-brown half-collar (Figs. 1, 2). White forehead and lores merging with white lower cheeks, chin, throat and rest of underparts (Fig. 1). Mantle, back and scapulars greyish-brown with paler fringes giving a somewhat scaled appearance (Fig. 2). Also median and greater secondary coverts with pale fringes ('tram lines'; Fig. 2). Moderately defined "M" mark across wings, leading to the rump/uppertail coverts appearing slightly darker than back and tail; otherwise lack of contrast on the upperparts (Fig. 2). Undertail with narrow dark border, no dark smudging on undertail coverts (Fig. 1). *Cookilaria*-like white underwing (Fig. 1) with sharply defined, narrow dark trailing edge, dark tip, wider black leading edge to outer underwing and clear diagonal black bar extending from joint towards centre of wing (prominent tick mark) – this contrasting underwing pattern was reminiscent of that of Black-winged Petrel.

(5) **Colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet:** Long and prominent bill black; Iris dark; feet not seen.

(6) **Calls:** No calls were heard.

(7) **Behaviour, movements, flight pattern, feeding, interactions with other birds, comparisons with other species:** Flight style reminiscent of that of White-necked Petrel rather than that of a *Cookilaria*.

### **Other species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?**

The following group of gadfly petrels (“**large black-and-white *Pterodroma* petrels**”, ONLEY & SCOFIELD 2007) is similar in size, shape and overall plumage pattern and therefore needs to be ruled out carefully.

Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) *P. cahow*: Similar shape and overall plumage pattern, but slightly smaller; darker upperparts leading to black-and-white rather than greyish-brown-and-white appearance, more prominent dark semi-collar, bolder trailing edge to underwing and bolder tick mark, typically dark spots on underprimary coverts, typically pale area on rump and/or uppertail coverts.

Hawaiian Petrel *P. sandwichensis*: Similar shape and overall plumage pattern, but slightly larger; much darker upperparts leading to black-and-white rather than greyish-brown-and-white appearance, blackish hood rather than cap, typically bolder trailing edge to underwing.

Galapagos Petrel *P. phaeopygia*: Similar shape and overall plumage pattern, but slightly larger; much darker upperparts leading to black-and-white rather than greyish-brown-and-white appearance, blackish hood/helmet (reminiscent of a Gould’s Petrel’s head pattern), bolder trailing edge to underwing.

Black-capped Petrel *P. hasitata*: Black cap, white nape collar; white rump, uppertail coverts and bases to the rectrices; in ‘scruffy’ birds both nape and rump may not be as obvious but still discernible.

Juan Fernandez Petrel *P. externa*: Similar in shape and head and upperpart colouration but slightly larger; very different underwing pattern: much whiter with much thinner black markings (narrower trailing edge, very small tick mark)

White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis*: Similar in shape and upperpart colouration but slightly larger; broad contrasting white nape collar (only shared by Black-capped and Vanuatu Petrel); different underwing pattern: much whiter with much thinner black markings (somewhat intermediate between Juan Fernandez and Barau’s Petrel’s underwing pattern)

Vanuatu Petrel *P. occulta*: Similar in shape and upperpart colouration but broad contrasting white nape collar (only shared by Black-capped and White-necked Petrel); different underwing pattern: much whiter with much thinner black markings (somewhat intermediate between Juan Fernandez and Barau’s Petrel’s underwing pattern)

The following ***Cookilaria* petrels** were considered in the field, although they are significantly smaller and typically differ also by their wing shape and flight style.

Black-winged Petrel *P. nigripennis*: Underwing pattern and larger size than Gould’s Petrel brought Black-winged Petrel into consideration. Although Black-winged Petrel has a 10% larger wingspan than a Gould’s Petrel (which were present for comparison), its broad wings with relatively long arms (inner wings) and short rounded hands (outer wings) leading to a quite bulky jizz and also the masked (rather than capped) appearance and more contrast on the upperparts ruled out this species. Further, in Black-winged the forehead appears to be quite steep and almost as tall as the length of the bill.

Gould’s Petrel *P. leucoptera*: Similar to Black-winged Petrel, Gould’s Petrel is much smaller than the observed bird and has relatively short wings (but pointier than Black-winged). Importantly Gould’s Petrel has a blackish hood/helmet (reminiscent of that of Galapagos Petrel) rather than a greyish cap.

Collared Petrel *P. brevipes*: Pale morph is very similar to Gould’s Petrel and hence ruled out by the same criteria.

The majority of **other *Pterodroma* species** (Great-winged *P. macroptera*, White-headed *P. lessonii*, Providence *P. solandri*, Magenta *P. magentae*, Murphy’s *P. ultima*, Soft-plumaged *P. mollis*, Zino’s *P. madeira*, Fea’s *P. feae*, Desertas *P. deserta*, Jamaican *P. caribbaea*, Kermadec *P. neglecta*, Herald *P. heraldica*, Trindade *P. arminjoniana*, Henderson *P. atrata*, Phoenix *P. alba*) and **all *Pseudobulweria* species** were easily ruled out by shape/size, general colouration and/or – importantly – by the underwing pattern. Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta* looks very different with its dark hood, underwings and undertail coverts, but beware of bleached birds (e.g. CLARKE 2007). Besides wing shape and size, the underwing pattern ruled out all ***Cookilaria* petrels with reduced amount of black** (Cook’s *P. cookii*, De Fillippi’s *P. defillippiana*, Stejneger’s *P. longirostris* and Pycroft’s *P. pycrofti*) **and also the other extreme** (Chatham *P. axillaris*, Bonin *P. hypoleuca* and Mottled *P. inexpectata*).

**Other species seen:** White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*: 1; **Gould’s Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera***: >2; **Grey-faced Petrels *P. macroptera gouldii***; Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus*; Flesh-footed Shearwaters *P. carneipes*; Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus*: 2; Short-tailed Shearwaters *P. tenuirostris*; Hutton’s Shearwater *P. huttoni*: 4; Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator*: 1; Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*: 20; Arctic Jaeger *S. parasiticus*: 1; Long-tailed Jaeger *S. longicaudus*: 2; Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*: 2; Crested Terns *Thalasseus bergii*; Silver Gulls *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*; Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*: approx. 12; Oceanic Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*: 12; unidentified Flying Fish sp.: 1

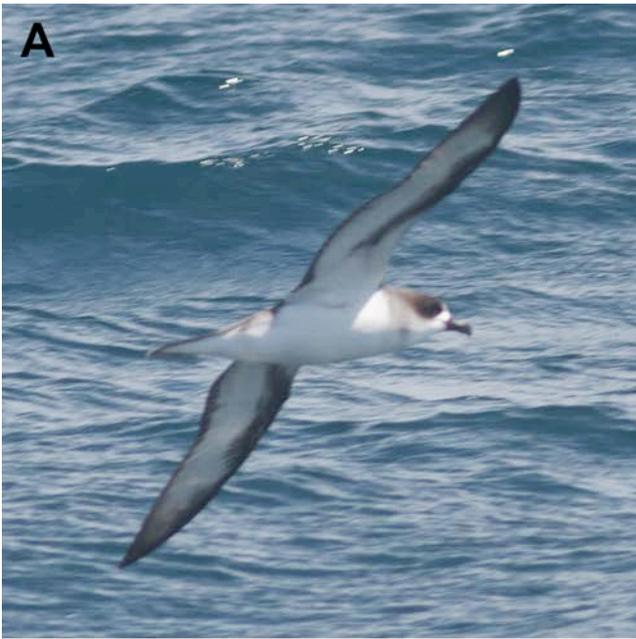


Figure 1: Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau* off Sydney, NSW, 10 February 2013 – underparts, underwing pattern. Note the capped (rather than hooded) appearance, enhanced by the pale upward notch in the area of the ear coverts, framed by the contrasting blackish eye-patch and the short greyish-brown half-collar; white forehead and lores merge with white lower cheeks, chin, throat and rest of underparts; undertail with narrow dark border, no dark smudging on undertail coverts; *Cookilaria*-like white underwing with sharply defined, narrow dark trailing edge, dark tip, wider black leading edge to outer underwing and clear diagonal black bar extending from joint towards centre of wing (prominent tick mark) – this contrasting underwing pattern was reminiscent of that of Black-winged Petrel. Photos: A, Raja Stephenson; B, Robert Hynson; C, David Mitford; D, Edwin Vella.

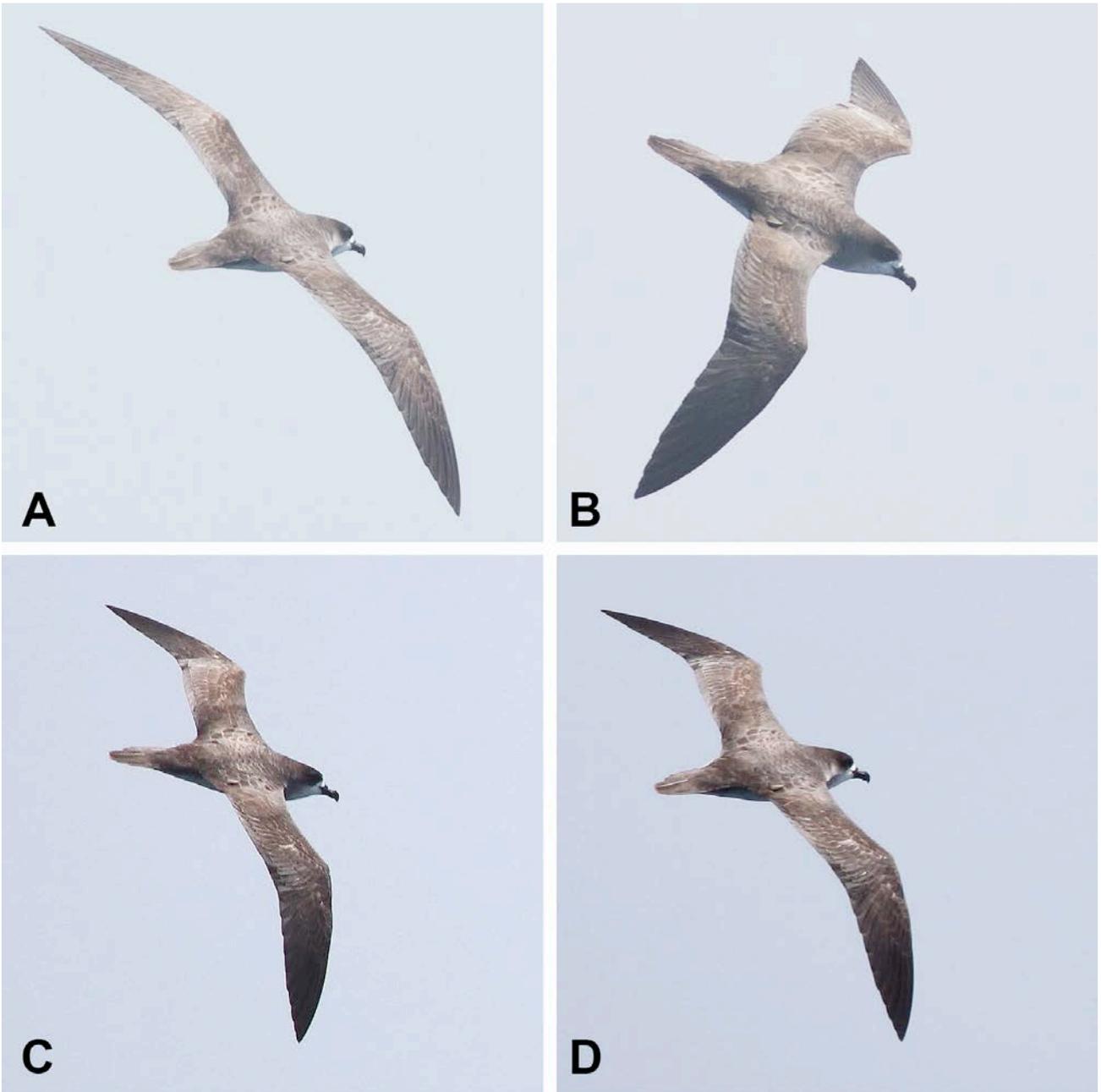


Figure 2: Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau* off Sydney, NSW, 10 February 2013 – upperparts, upperwing pattern. Note blackish-grey cap fading towards and merging with greyish-brown hindneck and saddle; the capped (rather than hooded) appearance enhanced by the pale upward notch in the area of the ear coverts, framed by the blackish eye-patch and a short greyish-brown half-collar; mantle, back and scapulars greyish-brown with paler fringes giving a somewhat scaled appearance; also median and greater secondary coverts with pale fringes ('tram lines'); moderately defined "M" mark across wings, leading to the rump/uppertail coverts appearing slightly darker than back and tail; otherwise lack of contrast on the upperparts. Photos: A, B, Raja Stephenson; C, D, David Mitford.

**Was the description written from notes and/or sketches made** (tick box):

during the observation or;  shortly after the observation or;  from memory;  with the aid of the photographs

**Please indicate supportive evidence available.**

Was the bird:  photographed,  taped or  video taped? If yes to any of these, by whom?

Photos by Raja Stephenson, Robert Hynson, David Mitford and Edwin Vella; more photographs of this bird can be seen here:

<http://www.adarman.com/Pelagics/New-South-Wales-Pelagics/2013-February-09-Sydney>

[http://www.sossa-international.org/forum/showthread.php?165-The-first-Barau-s-Petrel-off-the-Australian-East-coast-\(Sydney\)](http://www.sossa-international.org/forum/showthread.php?165-The-first-Barau-s-Petrel-off-the-Australian-East-coast-(Sydney))

**What experience have you had with the species in question?**

**NKH** has extensive experience with seabirds having been pelagic trip leader on many trips off of New South Wales, Tasmania, California, New Jersey/New York and Delaware/Maryland and having participated on many pelagic trips off North Carolina, Galapagos, Queensland, South Australia and New Zealand. NKH has been an active member of the Rare Birds Committees of New Jersey (USA), Hessen and Schleswig-Holstein (both Germany).

**RWS** has extensive experience with seabirds having participated on many trips off New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, New Jersey/New York, Delaware/Maryland, North Carolina and New Zealand.

**NKH & RWS** have seen 12 *Pterodroma* species worldwide, 9 of which in Australia. However, neither NKH nor RWS nor anyone else on the boat had ever seen a Barau's Petrel before.

**Signature:**

**Date: 11/02/2013**

Sent by e-mail



Please forward all material to: The Secretary, Birds Australia Rarities Committee, Birds Australia HQ, Riverside Road, East Hawthorn, VIC 3123