

Memorandum to: The Director of BirdLife Australia

From: BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC)

Date: 4th July 2013

Voting Members: Mike Carter David Bishop
Rohan Clarke Andrew Silcocks
David James Danny Rogers
Tony Palliser Jeff Davies

cc.

**Submission No 785: Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau*, off Sydney, NSW, 9th February 2013.
Submitted by: Nikolas Haass & Raja Stephenson.**

Verdict: Accepted

This case relates to the sighting of a Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau* approximately 26 nautical miles east-south-east of Sydney, NSW (34° 04' 45" S; 151° 42' 19" E) close to an area known locally as Browns Sea Mount. Although the sighting was brief the bird did approach to within approximately 50 metres, providing the opportunity for a number of observers to photograph the bird.

The submission includes a series of excellent photographs and a description which clearly rule out the similar species in particular Juan Fernandez Petrel *P. externa*, White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis*, Vanuatu Petrel *P. occulata* and Black-winged Petrel *P. nigripennis*. In summary the size and shape estimates helped to eliminate the similar but smaller 'Cookilaria' petrels including the Black-winged Petrel and the lack of a white collared combined with the extent of black on the underwing ruled out the remaining contenders. The underwing pattern is diagnostic when in combination with the overall greyish brown upper-parts, blackish-grey cap and lack of a distinct collar. The submission also points out that the immaculate fresh plumage would indicate the bird to be an immature.

Members voted unanimously in favour of acceptance.

This is only the 2nd confirmed record for Australia; the first was a bird sighted off Western Victoria on the 15th February 1987 (Carter *et al.* 1989; BARC Case 115). However, as pointed out within the submission, there are a number of other reported sightings from Australia, mostly from WA or the Indian Ocean Territories (Chapman & Cheshire 1987; Dunlop *et al.* 1988a, b; Bourne 1996; Johnstone & Darnell 2004). It appears to be the first record of this species from the Pacific Ocean, but not the most easterly since the report is of a bird sighted a month later in international waters in the mid Tasman (36°25.0'S, 161°06.7'E) on the 13th March 2013 by David James (*pers. comm.*).

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Tony Palliser
Chairman, BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee