

# NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission for a major rarity in New South Wales. (It is not a mandatory requirement) Please complete all sections ensuring that you attach all relevant information including copies of your notes, photographs or other supportive material. (PLEASE USE BLACK INK).

<b>Full Name:</b> Brook Whylie	Office Use
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<b>Address:</b> XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX NSW                    2XXX	<b>Phone No:</b> XXXXXXXX <b>Fax/Email:</b> bwhylic@internode.on.net
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<b>Species Name:</b> Blue Petrel	<b>Scientific Name:</b> <i>Halobaena caerulea</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2013 Time – 11:22am to 11:52am
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	30 minutes
First and last date of occurrence:	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2013
Distance to bird:	As close as 2-3 metres

<b>Site Location</b> (e.g 3km SE of Wybong Head, Munmorah SRA, NSW)
34° 43' 37" S; 151° 03' 32" E, 36.7 km SSE of Wollongong harbour

<b>Habitat</b> (describe habitat in which the bird was seen, together with any neighbouring habitats):
Open ocean
<b>Sighting conditions</b> (weather, visibility, light conditions etc.):
Weather was overcast, although light and visibility were excellent
<b>Optical aids used:</b>
Nil

<b>To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?</b>
No, Blue Petrels are not sighted frequently off Wollongong. To my knowledge, there have previously been 2 Blue Petrel sightings from Wollongong. Both were in July 1999. There have been no recorded sightings since.

<b>Did you use a field guide?</b> (or any other references for help with identification).
No

<b>Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who?</b> (please give names, addresses and phone numbers)?
Yes, other observers were present, including Lindsay Smith and Graham Barwell, as well as others on the Sandra K. No other observer disagreed with the identification.

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

100%

**Other details:** e.g. Do you have historical and or anecdotal information/comments relating to the prior occurrence/status of the species within or near this location? *If more space is needed for any section, please attach with your notes.*

The 1999 sightings were during a year where the water temperature was lower than average. The water temperature on the day of the sighting was approximately 19 degrees on the shelf, so not out of the ordinary. During the last 2 weeks of June 2013, there was an extraordinary influx of Common Diving Petrels and Prions along the NSW coast. This bird was in the company of a small flock of Fairy Prions, although there were 1,000's of Fairy Prions sighted on the day.

**Physical Description of Bird - Please describe only what you saw:** (1) No. of individuals present (living or dead); (2) age (adult, juvenile, immature) and sex; (3) size and shape; (4) plumage colour and pattern (including any details of moult); (5) colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet; (6) calls; (7) behaviour, movements, flight pattern, and anything else that might help to identify the bird e.g. feeding, interactions with other birds, describe where the bird was – on ground, in canopy, flying etc. Were comparisons made with other species? *Please also state whether you saw the complete bird or only part of it?* (e.g. upper/lower/front/rear of bird).

*(Attach a description and where possible a copy your field notes)*

- (1) 1 individual present.
- (2) Adult, sex unknown.
- (3) Size, approx 30cm, Shape, prion-like. It was noticeably larger than the Fairy Prions it was in the company of.
- (4) Plumage colour, overall greyish-blue with a darker 'M' pattern on the upper-wing. All white lower with a black cap and white forehead and lower cheeks .
- (5) Bill colour, Black. Eyes, Black. Legs/Feet, Grey .
- (6) Nil
- (7) Flight pattern was less erratic than the accompanying prions. It was feeding in the berly trail and it was almost prion/storm-petrel like in its feeding manner, with feet dangling, taking chum from the surface (see attached photo). It behaved similar to the prions, in that it would commence feeding, following the slick away from the boat. Once it was 40-50 metres away, it would circle and commence feeding again from the beginning of the slick.

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

*(Please append your comments / views following your description)*

Blue Petrels are quite distinctive and the extended views of this bird combined with all the photographs taken, meant that there was chance of it being confused with other species. The dark cap was quite prominent, eliminating all other prion species and the white tip of the tail was quite evident. There was little chance of confusing this bird with any other species.

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

during the observation or;  shortly after the observation or;  from memory? From photographs, as attached.

**Please indicate supportive evidence available.**

Was the bird: photographed,  taped or  video taped? If yes to any of these, by whom? By myself. The bird however was widely photographed by many on board the Sandra K.

**What experience have you had with the species in question?** (Did you know it was a Rare bird when you first saw it?)

Myself – Nil. I knew it was a rare bird from the moment it was sighted. I photographed it on its first approach to the boat,

then advised Lindsay and co of its presence.

Other observers, primarily Lindsay Smith and Graham Barwell, were on the Sandra K in 1999 and had observed Blue Petrels previously. There was no hesitation in calling the bird as a Blue Petrel.

**Signature:** Brook Whyllie

**Date:** 10 July 2013

Please forward all material to: The Secretary, NSWORAC ,  
Roger McGovern, 1/67 Cremorne Rd Cremorne NSW 2090  
Or e-mail to [roglou@bigpond.net.au](mailto:roglou@bigpond.net.au) 02 9953 3484



Blue Petrel, photo taken on the bird's first approach to the boat. The black head and extended collar were quite prominent. Photo: Brook Whyllie



Blue Petrel in flight, white tip to the tail shown. Photo Brook Whyllie



Blue Petrel, feeding in the berly trail. Photo Brook Whyllie