

Memorandum to: The Director of Birds Australia
From: Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC)
Date: 6th April 2015

Voting Members: Danny Rogers Jamie Matthew
 Jeff Davies Chris Brandis
 David Bishop Dion Hobcroft
 Andrew Silcocks Rohan Clarke

Cc.

Submission No. 837: Collared Petrel *Pterodroma brevipes* Britannia Seamounts, QLD 12th and 13th April 2014. Submitted by Daniel Mantle, Plaxy Barratt, Nikolas Haass, Rob Hynson, Rob Morris, Raja Stephenson and Paul Walbridge.

Verdict: Accepted

The submission relates to 3 sightings of Collared Petrel *Pterodroma brevipes* at sea within the vicinity of the 'Queensland and Britannia Sea Mounts, QLD on the 12th and 13th April 2014. Each sighting was brief with the two sightings on 12th April widely separated in time but may have involved the same individual but the sighting on 13th April was reportedly a different individual with a paler underwing and marginally paler underparts.

The submission describes each sighting in detail and combined with photographs carefully eliminates all other similar species. All the larger *Pterodroma* species are easily eliminated by plumage, structure and jizz. Each of the birds described are clearly 'cookilaria' type birds (that is basic pattern like a Cook's Petrel and small in size) and the identification is fairly straightforward given the fact that each involved dark-morphed birds. Structurally the birds were similar to Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera*. Intermediate to dark-morph Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* are perhaps the most similar, but that species was readily eliminated as it lacks the black carpal bar present on the observed birds and have a paler chin.

Members voted unanimously in favour of acceptance agreeing for the most part with the authors that the first two sightings fit perfectly with the recently described subspecies '*magnificens*' from Banks Island, Vanuatu (Bretagnolle and Shirihai 2010).

This is the 7th & 8th confirmed records from Australia. All the other accepted records have involved birds from seas around Norfolk Island (BARC Case Nos 603-608). As the nearest breeding grounds are on the islands of Kadavu and Gau in Fiji and islands in Vanuatu this species may occur regularly in this sector of Australian waters. Interestingly, the first two sightings involved bird(s) in seas off the coast of both Queensland and then New South Wales (28° 9.88'S & 28° 10.11'S) even though it was on the same day. Although, technically it could be argued that birds beyond the 12 nautical mile off-shore limit are in Australian waters rather than State waters.

Note: This submission should have been split into two, perhaps three, separate submissions.

References & Bibliography:

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- Watling, D. (1986), 'Notes on the Collared Petrel *Pterodroma (leucoptera) brevipes*', *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 106(2): 63-70

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