



Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission for a major rarity in Australia. (It is not a mandatory requirement) Please complete all sections ensuring that you attach all relevant information including any digital images (email to tonyp@bigpond.net.au or a.silcocks@birdsaustralia.com.au). Submissions to BARC should be submitted electronically wherever possible.

Full Name: Mick Roderick, Steve Roderick, Allan Richardson	Office Use
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Species Name: Great Shearwater	Scientific Name: <i>Ardenna gravis</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	On several separate occasions between approx 1030 and 1300 on Sun 20 th Nov 2011
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	First approach, approx 25 minutes. Second approach 10 mins. After that, several brief visits to the boat.
First and last date of occurrence:	As above
Distance to bird:	Closest approx 2m from boat.

Site Location Continental shelf, approx 24nm off Port Stephens heads, NSW (32 55 09 S / 152 34 24 E)
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Habitat (describe habitat in which the bird was seen, together with any neighbouring habitats): Open ocean
Sighting conditions (weather, visibility, light conditions etc.): Clear, slight northerly winds, slight sea and swell.
Optical aids used: MR - Swarovski 10x42 binoculars, SR – 10x 42 Vixen ApexPro binoculars, AR - Canon 10x42 image Stabilizer binoculars. MR and AR also had Canon EOS 7d digital cameras and telephoto lenses. The bird was close enough to use naked eye when near the boat.

To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site? We have no knowledge of this species being recorded at this location, with the closest known record to our knowledge being the bird we found off Swansea in April 2011.
Did you use a field guide? (or any other references for help with identification). Not at the time, but consulted various guides for confirmation.

Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who? (please give names, addresses and phone numbers)? Aside from the three people submitting the record, eleven other observers were present (details can be provided if required) – no-one disagreed with the ID.

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

Please confirm that you are willing for BARC to display your images (fully credited with your name) electronically - YES

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?

There had been an influx of records off Southern and South-eastern Australia (including Tasmania) in March / April 2011, including our record 7nm off Swansea in April. To our knowledge there hadn't been any claimed sightings of eastern Australia since April.

We believe this to be the northernmost record for the species on the eastern seaboard (the previous to this being the Swansea bird?).

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?

See included images. Combination of dark cap, collar (albeit indistinct), upperwing / underwing patterns, tail pattern, smudge on belly and size, etc make the bird diagnostic.

Communication with David James reveals that the bird is in somewhat of a “confused state of moult” with a mixture of fresh and worn feathers.

Please indicate other species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?

As the bird lacked a distinct collar, typical of Great Shearwaters, we initially considered Buller's Shearwater. This, along with Streaked Shearwater, White-necked Petrel etc were all eliminated by the combination of the above features.

Was the description written from memory? Yes

Were photographs taken? (please include where possible) Yes – see below.

What experience have you had with the species in question? (Did you know it was a Rare bird when you first saw it?) MR, SR and AR had previously seen this species off Swansea in April 2011. We are not sure about other observers having seen them overseas, but for the remainder of the group it was their first sighting in Australian waters.

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14th December 2011

Photo 1 (Allan Richardson)



In Photo 1 a number of diagnostic features are visible, being a diagnostic dark belly patch. Also visible in this view are sooty under-tail coverts and a hint of a white collar (which was not distinct on this particular bird).

Photo 2 (Allan Richardson)



Photo 2 shows a black bill and a well defined dark cap extending well below the eye. The coverts are scalloped with light edges and a little darker than the mantle plumage as is consistent with Great Shearwater. Buller's Shearwater would show greater contrast between wing coverts and mantle plumage and lack the scalloped appearance to the upper wing feathers.

Photo 3 (Allan Richardson)



Photo 3 shows a number of features diagnostic of Great Shearwater, including, diagonal and parallel underwing marks, light rump patch and well-defined dark cap below eye. Note the indistinct collar on this bird.

Photo 4 (Allan Richardson)



Photo 4 shows the dorsal view, showing the whitish rump. This view also shows well the indistinct collar on this particular bird.