

**BRISBANE SEABIRD STUDY GROUP**  
**Rare Seabird Forms**



(Completed forms to be passed on to BQRAC or BARC, where appropriate).

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**Vessel:** 90ft monohull Laura J  
**Crew:** Mark Grosskreutz (skipper), Craig Newton (deckie), Richard Cavill (deckie, chef)

**No. of observers present:** 13 (All birders on the vessel had prolonged views of this bird)

**Contact(s): (full name).** **Contact details: (include address, phone no(s), E-mail, etc.).**  
1). Paul Walbridge 16 Buna Street Chermside Qld (07) 32564124 paul.walbridge@health.qld.gov.au  
2). Dan Mantle Mobile phone 0413 554500  
3). Brian Russell 12 Barrique Court Thornlands Qld 4164 (07)38216950  
4). Raja Stephenson 58 Northcote Street, East Brisbane, QLD, 07 3391 6364.  
5). Steve Murray 16 Yundah Street Shorncliffe Qld 4017 (07) 38693305  
6). Nikolas Haass 58 Northcote Street, East Brisbane, QLD, 07 3391 6364  
**Date of sighting:** 12/4/2014

**Time & duration of sighting:** 1347 hrs for approx. 5 minutes

**Species name:** **Common:** Polynesian Storm-Petrel **Scientific:** *Nesofregatta fuliginosa*

**No. of birds observed:** 1

**Location:** 27 36.87S/155 07.68E The Queensland Sea Mount.  
**Be precise & include GPS readings when possible.**

**Habitat (indicate in appropriate box).**

Bay/Inlet	Headland	River Mouth	Ocean Beach	Shelf Waters	Slope Waters	Open Ocean	Other
						X	

**Optical and/or other aids used:** 12X50 Swarovski HD Binoculars

**Prior experience with this species:** Four of the six named above, including myself and Paul Walbridge saw a single bird off Southport on 19/1/2013, accepted by BARC, Case No. 774

**Confidence in sighting? (e.g. 90%, 100% etc.):** 100%

**Received:** **BQRAC Case No:** **BARC Case No:** **Recommendation:**

(Office Use Only).

## FORM B

### **Weather Conditions: (including wind speed & direction).**

With category 5 Cyclone Ita crossing the coast over far north Queensland and with a fairly intense low over the southern NSW coast, working its way up the NSW coast, gusty NW-N winds on the Friday evening to 20+ knots. Winds easing slightly to 15-20 knots from the north on Saturday with a projected strong southerly change over Saturday evening not really eventuating. Sunday saw light SE winds, freshening slightly later in the day. Saturday saw some high cloud with mainly fine sunny conditions, with cloud increasing on Sunday with the SE change. Maximum air temps. over the weekend 26° C, barometer 1012 hPa.

### **Sea Conditions: (including water temp. °C, when possible).**

Seas to 1.5 metres on a 2 metre swell on the Saturday, easing to slight seas on a 2-3 metre swell from the SE on the Sunday. Sea-surface temps. 24-25° C.

### **General Observations: (include behaviour of bird(s), view, distance etc).**

Just after lunch on Saturday I was alerted by Craig Newton (deckie) due to a shout of “ ‘white-bellied’ Storm-Petrel” moving in front of the bow of the boat (I was at the stern). I walked along the port side of the boat with Paul Walbridge and quickly located the bird moving towards and across us (as we headed S the bird was moving approximately NE). The bird was approximately 50m away. The light was perfect, as it was behind us and the swell was dropping such that the bird was regularly visible for prolonged periods. Within a few seconds of putting my binoculars on the bird I got a good view of both the upper-parts and under-parts and called the bird immediately as a Polynesian Storm-Petrel. The bird was in view for about 1½ minutes initially and then it disappeared temporarily before moving back in front of the boat where it was visible for a few minutes. During this time it ranged from c.40m to 100m. At no point was it attracted to the burley behind the vessel.

### **Description of Bird(s): (be as detailed as possible).**

I was immediately struck by the size and striking nature of this bird and when you get good views, they are a very distinctive species. The bird was clearly a large ‘black & white’ storm-petrel, with large broad wings, a long, broad forked tail and long legs. It had a strong, low, graceful and direct flight. As it moved across the front of the boat it alternated between long glides and then it flicked its legs in the water to propel itself forward, whilst simultaneously flicking its wings.

**Bare Parts:** All appeared black. The bill was quite noticeable in length and slightly decurved; the legs long, and frequently used in flight. When gliding, the legs protruded well beyond the tail.

**Upper-parts:** The bird was generally dark brown/black above. The primaries and secondaries were blackish with the wing-coverts and mantle distinctly browner, with a dabbled look to them. Pale fringes to the secondary coverts created a weak covert (wing) bar, but this didn’t appear as distinct as the January 2013 bird. The other key features of the upper-parts were (a) the broad white rump separating the long, broad forked tail from the mantle and (b) the very distinctive partial white-collar coming from under the chin and separating the comparatively small dark head from the bird’s body.



**Rob Morris 2014**

**Under-parts:** The bird’s under-parts were very strikingly pied and my initial view, a second after putting my binoculars on the bird, allowed for the immediate identification. The under-parts were bright white (partly due to the sunny conditions) with a broad blacky/brown band across the upper-chest forming a ‘black-white-black white’ look from the head to chin to upper-chest to chest / belly. The under-tail was also a blackish- brown. Although I did not see this in the field, the lower chest and belly showed some distinct black streaking; perhaps suggesting the bird was a light intermediate bird (see plate below from Onley & Scofield (2007) where bird ‘3d’ in the plate shows a light intermediate bird).



**Polynesian Storm-Petrel from Onley & Scofield (2007)**

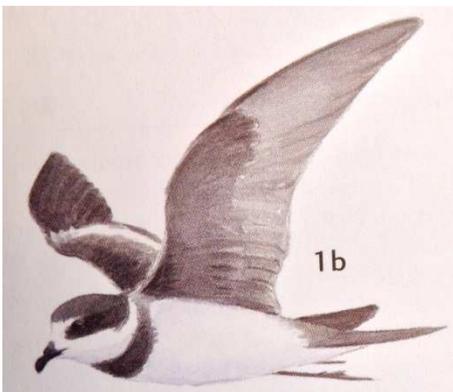
The under-wings were dark on the primaries and secondaries (trailing edge) and along the forewing / leading edge. The axillaries were white forming a broad white bar along the center of the under-wing (secondary and primary coverts) with some dark centers in the outer-parts adjacent to the primaries (the latter point seen in photos not in the field).



**Raja Stephenson 2014**

**How was it distinguished from other similar species?:**

Very easily! The size, broad dark chest band and partial white collar eliminates all other ‘white-bellied’ storm petrels we see regularly in Qld / Australian waters including Black-bellied (common), White-bellied (very scarce), White-faced (seasonally common), and the yet to be described ‘New-Caledonian’ (which may be common off Qld with now 40 birds seen in the last 3 years) . It is also clearly not a New-Zealand or Grey-backed Storm-Petrel. Hornby’s Storm-Petrel has some similarities to Polynesian Storm-Petrel and should be eliminated when one sees a storm-petrel with a dark-chest band and a partial white collar. However, the size, face-pattern, under-wing and general coloration eliminate Hornby’s Storm-Petrel (see plate from Onley & Scofield (2007)).



**Hornby’s Storm Petrel from Onley & Scofield (2007)**

**Reference Books used:**

1. Harrison, P (1985) *Seabirds an identification guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.
2. Harrison, P (1897) *Seabirds of the World A Photographic Guide*. Helm
3. Endicott, J & Tipling D (1997) *Photographic Handbook Of The Seabirds Of The World*. Stakepole Books.
4. Onley, D & Scofield, P ( 2007) *Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World*. Helm

**FORM C – PHOTOS**

**Rob Morris Photos 1-4**



**Photo 1 – Upper-parts**



**Photo 2– Upper-parts**



**Photo 3– Under-parts**



**Photo 4 – Under-parts**

**Paul Walbridge Photos 5 & 6**



**Photo 5– Under-parts**



**Photo 6– Upper-parts**