

THE PETREL

2013



Annual Report for Southport
The Brisbane Seabird Study Group
SOSSA, Northern Sector

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**Cover Photo: - Tahiti Petrel (*Pseudobulweria rostrata*) – Paul Walbridge.
This page: - 37 ft Steber monohull M.V. Grinner.**

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Foreword

Pelagic trips were first conducted in the region in the late 1970s, mainly out of Brisbane. Initial trips were conducted by a number of people, notably Tony Palliser, David Stewart, Tom Tarrant and Chris Corben etc. circa 1990, Chris Corben handed the reins over to me and I continue to run these trips to this day, albeit on a more organized and regular basis. From before 1990 until April 1995 the trips were run out of Manly Boat Harbour in Brisbane using the wooden hulled Murphy Star. This meant a long trip, usually under cover of darkness across Moreton Bay before we got out into open ocean. Also, the trips were at best sporadic and four trips a year would be a good year.

Early in 1995, the late Tony Ashby (a founding member of SOSSA) not long from Sydney and newly arrived on the Gold Coast negotiated with Sea World to trial their Research & Rescue Vessel. The trial was successful and from April 1995 until late 2000 we enjoyed a fruitful relationship with Sea World and trips became as a rule, monthly when weather permitted. The trips were now operating out of Southport and via the Southport Seaway we were entering open ocean almost immediately! This partnership ended towards the end of 2000 and I took a year off running pelagics.

Early in January 2002, Steve McCourt, who had worked with us when he was a Sea World employee, contacted me. He'd recently acquired a boat and was keen to start trialling it as an ongoing concern as a pelagic trip and fishing charter. We trialled the vessel which was fast but ran with a pair of large outboard motors and when the number crunching was complete the eventual pricing for that time proved to be too high. I might mention here that we had been rather spoilt by Sea World with charter costs, as the trips were subsidised somewhat, therefore the price now being asked was too big a jump.

Whilst working with Sea World, on the odd occasion when the vessel was unavailable we would use one of the local 'Wahoo Charters' vessels based at Mariner's Cove. I approached the owner of this fleet of four charter boats and negotiated a deal which enabled us to use one of the vessels, once a month at a reasonable cost per head. With four boats ranging from 42 feet to 65 feet there was always a vessel available. Due to circumstances however, by 2006 the operation was becoming less viable and we needed to find yet another operator & vessel.

It must be said here, that finding an operator and vessel prepared to take a bunch of birders out to sea further than they would normally go and for considerably less money than their usual commercial rates, is extremely difficult. Even in a highly competitive arena like the Gold Coast. There was however, yet another option open to us. During our tenure with both Sea World and Wahoo we had been supplied (with written permission from DPI) with free shark liver for berley, by the local beach protection contractor for the Gold Coast beaches, Craig Newton. Craig was keen to start something different and he and various crew over time have become enthusiastic supporters of what we do.

The 2013 edition of the Petrel features an account of a Bonefish expedition to Kiribati by Jon Norling, which turned out to be a mouth watering photographic shoot of such exotic species as Christmas Shearwater and Phoenix Petrel. Rob Morris writes up an account of his Southern Ocean Islands journey and the editor produces an in depth account of the first ever Australian occurrence of Stejneger's Petrel, during a Mooloolaba pelagic trip off the Sunshine Coast. There is also a summary of land based sea watches by Colin Reid, which I hope will become annual. All up, a ninety four page summary, with excellent photographs of not only what went on with Southport for the year 2013 but also about what Southport sea birders got up to during the year.

Paul Walbridge, Editor.

Introduction

Following on from a record breaking 2012, the year 2013 produced even more species with a total of 54 sighted for the year, including two new species for Southport, those being Polynesian Storm-Petrel and Common Diving Petrel. A total of 15 trips were conducted for the year, totalling 142 hours 40 minutes out on the water, also a record.

January ensured the year started with a bang with a total of 17 species sighted outside the seaway and what quality they were. At the main drift point Tahiti, Kermadec and Great-winged Petrels were the dominant species of the day, along with the usual numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters of course. Singles of Streaked Shearwater, Gould's Petrel and Red-tailed Tropicbird put in an appearance but a single Wilson's Storm-Petrel was a surprise for the month of January. The highlights though were a single Polynesian Storm-Petrel, only the second record for Australia and the first from a mainland based pelagic, also 2 Coral Sea/New Caledonian Storm-Petrel types.

Two trips were conducted in February, on the 9th 19 species recorded with 5 species of pterodroma present, being Great-winged in large numbers, Kermadec, up to 4 White-necked Petrels and singles of Gould's and Black-winged Petrels. 2 Black Petrels at the rear of the vessel was special, with singles of Red-tailed Tropicbird and Red-footed Booby gave the day a distinct tropical feel along with the 23 Tahiti Petrels. The regular trip on the 16th didn't produce quite the diversity of the preceding trip but there were still similar numbers of Tahiti Petrel though Great-winged Petrel numbers had tapered off somewhat but 2 White-necked Petrels were still a welcome sight. The real surprise was the sighting of both Great and Lesser Frigatebirds with the former in particular being only the second Southport record. The 23rd of March produced another fine batch of sightings with huge numbers of Tahiti Petrel (90) and once again good numbers of Kermadec Petrel and Great-winged Petrel. Another White-necked Petrel turned up and 5 Providence Petrels was an early return for Southport. It also saw the northerly autumn migration of Wilson's Storm-Petrel begin with 13 sighted and a single White Tern was a welcome sight.

April was a bit of a mixed bag, not particularly high in diversity but some interesting sightings nonetheless. The numbers of Tahiti Petrel had dropped down to just 2 with the numbers of Providence Petrel rising to double figures as would be expected. Also expected were the rising numbers of Wilson's Storm Petrels passing through northward but 2 White-faced Storm-Petrels were a welcome sight and becoming more regular off this area of coastline. Short-tailed Shearwaters barely made it into double figures but two sightings of Sooty Shearwater, unusual in these waters, spiced things up a bit. Another single Kermadec Petrel plus both Pomarine and Arctic Jaegers rounded off the interesting species for the day. May as usual was of quite low diversity species wise but a few Providence Petrels were around and notably so were three species of Storm-Petrel. Wilson's Storm-Petrel just got into double figures with 10 and the first Black-bellied Storm-Petrels for the season with 3 around, in the slick. Of particular interest though was a very fresh plumaged, very pale and grey looking White-faced Storm-Petrel.

Two trips were conducted in June, with the scheduled one on the 15th producing one of the lowest winter counts I could recall, with only Providence Petrel around in any numbers and with a few Common Noddies and Wilson's Storm-Petrels and just a single Black-bellied Storm-Petrel. The first Australian Gannets for the year were also late and only a low count of 11. The second June trip on the 29th was a vast improvement, with four species of Albatross out wide, namely Black-browed (2), Campbell (1), Indian Yellow-nosed (2) and a near adult Buller's Albatross, only the 3rd Southport record for this species. The one and only Cape Petrel for the year appeared and the day was notable for the numbers of Fairy Prion, with a lone Antarctic Prion singled out. Both Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwaters were present in low numbers but Australasian Gannet and Providence Petrel numbers had increased, a single Great-winged Petrel (*P. m.gouldi*) was a notable Winter record. Just before the Seaway on the way back a juvenile Northern Giant Petrel arrived at the stern of the vessel.

Two pelagics were also conducted in July, with the non-scheduled one on the 6th and while it was unexpectedly quiet, on an almost becalmed day there were large numbers of Fairy Prion still present and a single Black-bellied Storm-Petrel out wide but otherwise very low numbers of the usual Winter suspects. The surprise of the day was the finding of a recently deceased Common Diving Petrel floating on the sea surface a long awaited new addition to the Southport list! The scheduled July 20th trip was probably the most disappointing Winter ever conducted from Southport with a mind numbing seven species sighted outside the seaway but an early returning Wedge-tailed Shearwater was notable. August saw the Winter going out with a slight raise in spirits, a Winter that showed a lot of promise with often volatile southerly blows but with the timing of the trips slightly out. August 17th was a vast improvement on July, with the return of large numbers of Providence Petrel (109) and Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (2), with also 2 Kermadec Petrels. This trip also saw the usual August return of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters with 215 sighted. The biggest thrill for the few southerners on board was the sighting of an early returning Tahiti Petrel in the same field of view as the days' sole Black-browed Albatross.

September 21st was extremely quiet with just a few Wilson's Storm-Petrels, a few remaining Australasian Gannets and just a solitary Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Providence Petrel providing the only real numbers, with 25 sighted. The October pelagic showed a great improvement in both species diversity and numbers, with 16 species sighted. Predominant were storm-petrels, with a total of 356 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, a year peak of 10 Black-bellied Storm-Petrels and unusually for Spring a lone White-faced Storm-Petrel. There had been a massive east coast wreck of Short-tailed Shearwaters and the 20th saw large numbers of ravenous birds at the back of the vessel, three species of pterodroma were sighted, namely Providence Petrel, Mottled Petrel and Gould's Petrel. Once again a South Polar Skua put in an October appearance, no doubt preying on dying Short-tailed Shearwaters and once again one of those enigmatic dark birds. The big surprise of the day was the appearance of two Shy/White-capped Albatrosses, most likely '*steadi*', unheard of in October in these waters.

November 16th still saw a few storm-petrels around with 11 Wilson's and a late Black-bellied Storm-Petrel. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters had returned back to their usual numbers after the dearth of birds in the previous two months. Flesh-footed Shearwaters got into double figures as did Tahiti Petrel, after not being seen since August. A lone Kermadec Petrel was the only pterodroma sighted on the day and the first Jaegers for the Spring were recorded, namely 4 Pomarine Jaegers and 2 Arctic Jaegers. As with last year, December saw the year go out with a bang with the first White-tailed Tropicbird encountered for the year, as often happens, on the sea surface. Four species of Shearwater present, including Wedge-tailed, Flesh-footed, Short-tailed and Hutton's Shearwaters. Tahiti Petrels had built up in numbers with 33 sighted but it was a day for pterodromas with Kermadec Petrel (14), Gould's Petrel (1) and White-necked Petrel (4).

Paul Walbridge, Editor

Point Lookout, North Stradbroke Island

2013

Colin Reid

Pelagics are great – to see Petrels, Prions, Shearwaters and Albatrosses and the like, up close and personal – there is little to compare. However, sea-watching from a land base can be very rewarding, is significantly cheaper, definitely more comfortable and much less prone to sea sickness!

Point Lookout on North Stradbroke Island is, arguably, the premier sea-watching location in SE Queensland – possibly the best in the state, given that it is located roughly at the most northerly point of most cold water species movements. It is a bit of a trek to get there – unlike similar sea-watch points in NSW one cannot easily just drive up – the most economical method of transport for a day visit involves getting to Cleveland, using a water taxi across the bay and a public bus to the point. Once one is there, however, one can stay as long as one likes!

A spotting scope is almost a necessity. Some species do come well within binocular range, especially in wild weather, but to experience the passage properly, and feel confident in identification, a scope is required. The best winds are high winds – the stronger the better, regardless of direction. South-easterlies are, without doubt, the most productive and westerlies the least.

The best months are likely to be March, June, July and October, however, high winds at any time of year are worth a look. The lowest months, in terms of species and numbers, tend to be May, August and September. This can all change overnight though with the arrival of a severe weather pattern – as happened in January this year. Time of day seems to be less important, but habit has resulted in most sea-watches being conducted from early morning. The glare from the sun on the water can make life difficult in the mornings and the light is much better after 11.00 when the sun has moved far enough west. To date too few observations have been recorded in late afternoon to provide a realistic comparison.

Identifying seabirds from a land based position has the advantage of a stable platform rather than a rolling boat, however, the disadvantage is they are often a lot further away – a lot, lot further away! The horizon is approximately 8 kms from the sea-watch point and sometimes it seems the birds are at least that far away! Identifying birds even by scope at 2-3 kms can be challenging and does require experience. Getting out there and watching commoner species, such as Wedge-tailed and Short-tailed Shearwaters, does pay off as one is then more likely to pick up the unusual flight pattern, wing beat or small plumage difference that often results in an unusual sighting of something less common.

So to the year that was:

Sea-watching in January ran its normal course for most of the month. A visit on the 6th was typical of the month – approximately 1000 **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, generally heading south, a tenth that number of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** also hurrying south, 1 **Buller's Shearwater** and a few **Pomarine** and **Arctic Jaegers** – both latter species appear to hang around the general area during the summer months as we seem to see similar birds at roughly the same time of day.

As the end of the month drew closer cyclone Oswald raised his ugly head and conditions improved – for sea-watching anyway! On the Saturday (26.1) 7 hours huddled behind the rock in howling north easterlies and horizontal rain produced one of the best sea-watches of recent times. Everything was heading north. In excess of 6000 **Wedge-tailed**, 1 **Sooty**, 1 **Short-tailed**, 4 **Buller's**, 1 **Streaked**, 8 **Fluttering** and 1 **Hutton's Shearwaters**, 2 **Black-winged Petrels** passed by within a couple of hundred meters followed by 6 **White-necked Petrels** at a similar range, 25+ **Sooty Terns** and 2 **Pomarine Jaegers** and 1 **Arctic Jaeger** braved the weather. It was an awesome sight. Unfortunately the ferries shut down early on the Sunday morning and there was no access to the island from the mainland until late on Monday evening when it was all over.

Hoping for some hangovers from the cyclone the Point was visited the following weekend – the first in February – but things had returned very much to normal for that month. A few **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, a

handful of **Common Noddies**, 1 **Arctic Jaeger** and 1 **Hutton's Shearwater** were recorded. A second visit later in the month (23rd) produced only a few **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, a **Sooty Tern** and 1 **Common Noddy**! The first visit in March (3rd) produced the expected birds for this time of year, **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, a small number of **Common Noddies**, **Fluttering/Hutton's type Shearwaters**, **Pomarine & Arctic Jaegers** and also a single **White-necked Petrel**. This inspired a follow-on visit on 9th which was a repeat of the first visit minus the Petrel, but with an increase of 100 **Common Noddies** in the 4 and a half hour watch. April, and the point was sea-watched twice - on the 6th and 13th. On both occasions the bird species were the usual for the month – **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, **Common Noddies** and both previously listed Jaegers. A surprisingly early visitor put in an appearance on the 6th – a **Black-browed Albatross** cruised south! This was an unusual record for April and just goes to show – anything can happen on a sea-watch!

May is traditionally the quietest month of the year. The summer birds have dropped off and the winter birds have still to start. This year was no exception – **Australian Gannets** put in a limited appearance, most appeared to be moving locally seeking schools of fish, rather than actually heading one way or the other. The single sea-watch on 26th of the month included a few **Common Noddies**, but little else of seabird interest.

June is, in contrast, the most productive month in terms of numbers and this year started with a bang. A five and a half hour sea-watch on the 9th produced **Australian Gannets**, 5 sightings of, probably, 3 **Giant Petrels**, 4 sightings of 2 separate **Black-browed Albatrosses**, 14 **Great-winged Petrels**, 2 **White-headed Petrels**, 1 **Kermadec Petrel**, 1 **Brown Booby** and 80 **Common Noddies**. The Kermadec* being the first live record off North Stradbroke Island. (Weather conditions: south-easterlies 15-20 knot, gusting to 25+ knots, 2-3 metre swell.

The wild weather off Sydney later in the month and the records of birds moving north up the NSW coast stimulated further visits on the 26th and 29th resulting in awesome views and numbers of **Fairy Prions**. **Gannets** were still in evidence; a **Giant Petrel** was seen on both visits, a **Sooty Shearwater** on the 26th and a **Brown Booby** on the 29th, **Fluttering** and **Fluttering/Hutton's type Shearwaters** were also seen in some numbers. A flock of 5 **Hardheads** also flew south on 26th, much to the amazement of the watcher, but they were obviously local ducks, not migrating!

The Fairy Prion movement continued into July, but numbers were greatly reduced as the weather deteriorated. July has traditionally produced the most Albatrosses, however, this year both numbers and variety were down. Four sea-watches were recorded, all early in the month 2nd, 6th, 7th and 9th). The 8.00am – 4.00pm sea-watch on the 2nd (30-35 knot southerly winds and the 2-3 meter swell) produced 2 **Black-browed Albatross**, 1 **Giant Petrel**, 2 **Great-winged Petrels**, 1 **Providence Petrel**, 1 **Brown Skua**, 15 **Fluttering Shearwaters**, 130 **Australian Gannets** and 620 **Common Noddies**, but only 2 Prion sp were sighted. On the 6th the first live **Common Diving Petrel** seen in Queensland waters was noted heading south along with approx. 40-60 **Fairy Prions** and a handful of **Fluttering Shearwaters**. Again the calmer conditions (5-10 knot southerlies, 1 meter swell) brought in the Prions. On the 7th and 9th despite lengthy searches no more Diving Petrels were seen and the Prions had moved off completely.

Unfortunately after July the weather did not provide encouragement to visit Pt Lookout again for most of the second half of the year! This was unusual, as in the past, south easterly winds have become dominant in mid October and provided opportunity for good sea-watching through to December. In 2013 though, the winds shifted continually between north, north easterly and even north westerly with the odd south easterly airflow for a few hours or days, but not sustained enough to provide encouragement to travel. A couple of short visits in October and December brought reports of small number of shearwaters – **Wedge-tailed** and **Short-tailed** and, particularly in December, a number of **Pomarine** and **Arctic Jaegers** and a couple of **White-winged Black Terns**.

Point lookout will remain a premier, land based sea watching site – possibly the best in Queensland – especially when a strong south-easterly is blowing or a cyclone is approaching the coast! The potential is enormous given the reports accumulated over the past 30 years, and, as always with sea-watching, you never know what will turn up!

* The first Kermadec Petrel sighting from Point Lookout occurred on 5th May 1985, a pale intermediate bird. Record in the QOS Newsletter and 1985 Bird Report. Chris Corben, Tony Palliser and David Stewart. (Ed).

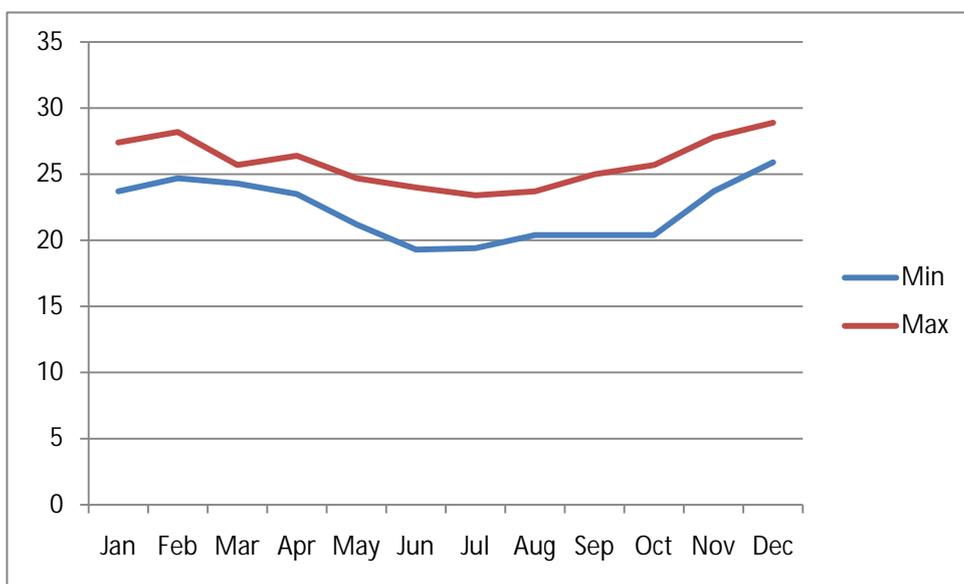
The Region

The area around Southport is situated in the south Coral Sea, with the warm, north/ south moving East Australian Current being the major influential feature. The main offshore underwater structures in this region are a series of Sea-mounts and Guyots, ranging north to south from adjacent to Fraser Island Queensland, down to Ballina, NSW. These are in order north/south, Fraser Seamount, Brisbane Guyot, Moreton Seamount, Queensland Guyot and Stradbroke Seamount, with distances from shore ranging from the widest, Fraser Seamount at 138 nautical miles to the closest the Queensland Guyot at 91.1 nautical miles. The highest of these are the Fraser Seamount, rising to within 359 metres of the sea surface and the Queensland Guyot which comes within 306 metres of the sea surface, it is these areas where upwelling is most likely to occur.

Closer to shore and in the vicinity of Southport, the main offshore structures range from Mick's Mountain, ENE of Southport, moving south through Jim's Mountain, the Riviera Grounds and the Tweed Canyon's south of the Qld/NSW border adjacent to Fingal Head or just to the south. These rises are all around roughly 30 nautical miles offshore but the Tweed Canyons are considerably closer to the coast, however all these sea floor rises lie off the Continental Shelf.

As with any part of the Australian coastline or anywhere else for that matter the Continental Shelf ends at the 100 fathom (or approx. 200 metre) mark, this is also referred to as the Shelf-break. Distance from shore varies greatly around the Australian coastline but off the Gold Coast it is roughly around 23 nm offshore at 153 51.50E ranging further out, moving further north, approaching the southern reaches of the Great Barrier Reef.

Understandably, given the region lies in the southern Coral Sea and not that far south of the world's largest collection of coral reefs, the water temperatures are warm in summer and still relatively warm in winter. During these winter months, May-August, colder water currents from the south push up, forcing the weakening warm current further out wide.

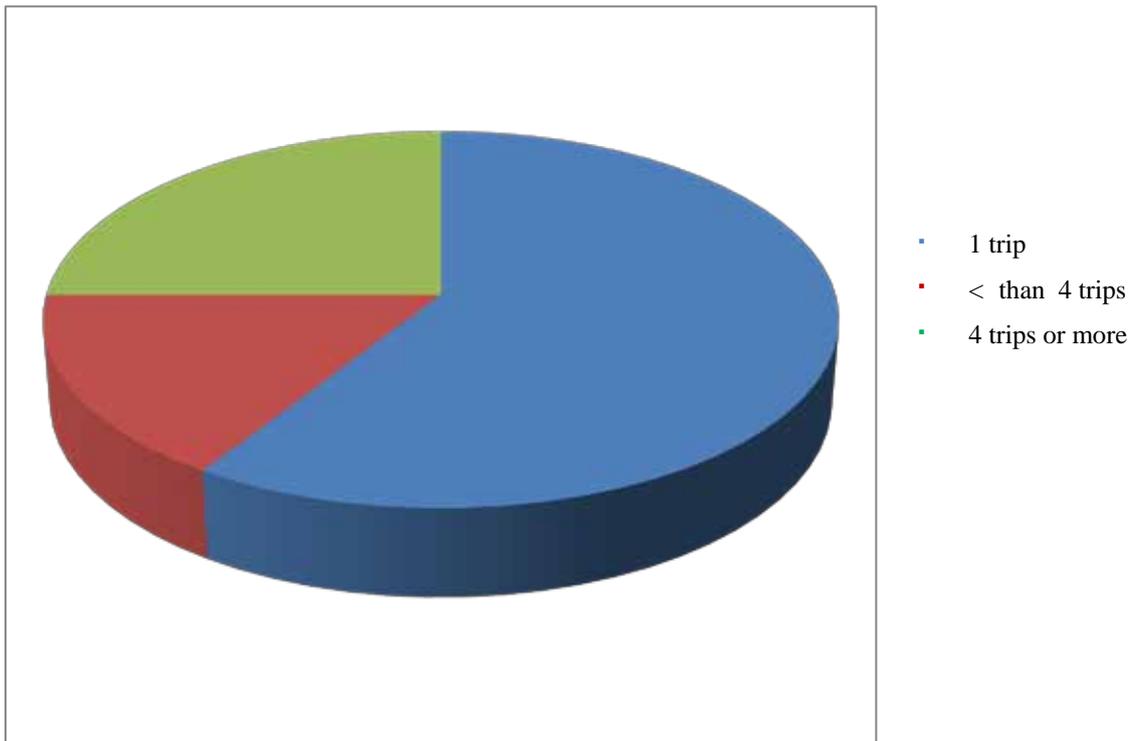


Following the general, annual trend, the greatest variation in sea surface temperatures occurred during the winter months, unlike the previous two years however sea surface temperatures were up, both in winter and summer months. The Bureau of Meteorology reported that the winter of 2013 was the warmest on record and this is perhaps reflected in some degree by the warmer than normal winter sea-surface temperatures. This may explain the paucity of 'cold water' birds recorded during the winter months, in fact it was close to the poorest winter for Southport re, diversity and numbers of southern species. It was however a year where tropical, warm water species were very well represented.

Participation

A total of 81 patrons travelled out in 2013 on a record total of 15 trips, at an average of 13.6 patrons per trip, just slightly down on last year. Whilst as expected the vast majority of patrons came from Queensland, five came from New South Wales, five from Victoria, four from Tasmania one from South Australia and one from Western Australia. International visitors comprised four from the United Kingdom, two from the United States and finally one from Canada. We could still maybe expect to get a few more interstate visitors but clearly we are still not attracting the numbers of overseas visitors we would like, not like our southern counterparts do, such as Sydney and Wollongong.

Once only trippers this year amounted to 48, a percentage of 59%, down 5% on 2012, meaning 33 returned for at least a second trip at 41% up 5% on the preceding year, encouraging. A further breakdown revealed 13 patrons at 16% travelled on at least a third of the trips up 4% on 2012 and of these 9 or 11% participated in 50% or more of the trips, maintaining the status quo in that regard. Again, only one patron managed to get out on all the trips and that was not surprisingly myself, although Rob Morris has publicly stated that he intends to equal that for 2014, we shall see.



Galerie



Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia* 16/2/13. Paul Walbridge.



Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta* 17/8/13. Paul Walbridge.



White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis* 16/2/13. Paul Walbridge.



Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* 19/1/13. Paul Walbridge.



Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* 20/10/2013. Brian Russell.



Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta* 21/12/2013. Brian Russell.



Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* 20/10/2013. Brian Russell.



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri* 29/6/2013. Brian Russell.



Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregetta fuliginosa* 19/1/2013. Brian Russell.



Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregetta fuliginosa* 19/1/2013. Steve Murray.



Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregatta fuliginosa* 19/1/2013. Todd Burrows.



Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregatta fuliginosa* 19/1/2013. Todd Burrows.



Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni* 9/2/2013. Rob Morris



Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis* 9/2/2013. Rob Morris.



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* 9/2/2013. Rob Morris.



Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregatta tropica* 20/10/13. Raja Stephenson.



Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera* 20/10/13. Raja Stephenson.



Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri* 17/8/13. Raja Stephenson.



Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata* 23/3/13. Jon Norling.



Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur* 29/6/13. Jon Norling.

Systematic List

Sightings in detail and other relevant data are stored on the Southport data-base. In the annotated list below, where sightings of a particular species are of a large volume on a particular date, then a count is given between the two extreme waypoints, west to east. When there are low counts taken and in particular with rare bird sightings, individual waypoints are provided. The IOC checklist, in the main is followed here, in line with BARC, to whom national rarities are submitted.

PHAETHONTIFORMES

Phaethontidae

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

Breeds on Lady Elliott Island to the north and Lord Howe Island to the southeast but rarely sighted on Southport pelagics.

Single adult birds on 19th January 27 57.84S/154 01.36E and on 9th February, 27 56.20S/153 39.63E.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

Uncommon visitor, often after strong SE winds, likely any time of year.

A single immature bird, first sighted on the water, 21st December, 27 47. 50S/153 55.07E.

PROCELLARIIFORMES

Hydrobatidae

Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregatta fuliginosa*

Breeds on a few Pacific Islands. Endangered. Vagrant to Australian waters.

A single pale-phased bird sighted on 19th January, in continental slope waters 27 55.33S/154 00.55E, constituting the 2nd accepted Australian sighting and the first from an Australian based pelagic.

Oceanitidae

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant with small numbers over-wintering.

Rarely recorded in January, with a single bird on 19th January, 28 02.39S/154 03.05E. None then until 23rd March, when a total of 13 sighted, 27 49.29S/153 58.74E out to 28 01.97S/154 02.68E. Numbers rising to 31 on 27th April ranging from 27 44.38S/153 57.13E to 27 46.51S/153 57.49E, clearly representing a single drift sector. On 18th May only 10 sighted ranging from 27 46.89S/153 57.51E out to 27 49.84S/153 58.04E. Two trips in June, with the 15th producing 19 birds from 27 46.34S/153 52.36E to 27 46.05S/153 53.48E and the 29th seeing just 7 birds, from 27 53.82S/153 35.07E out to 27 49.24S/153 49.63E. The 6th July saw just 5 birds sighted, 27 51.48S/153 50.11E out to 27 51.62S/153 57.28E and August 17th producing 9 birds, ranging from 27 49.43S/153 56.25E to 27 5.20S/153 57.39E. 12 was a moderate count for September on the 21st, ranging from 27 47.09S/153 55.86E to 27 45.56S/153 56.94E, whilst 20th October saw extraordinary numbers with 356 sighted between 27 55.97S/153 43.51E out to 27 48.87S/153 57.15E, with a high count of 70 birds at 27 54.58S/153 56.13E. Final numbers recorded for the year on 16th November with a total of 11 sighted between 27 47.68S/153 55.75E and 27 46.22S/153 56.85E.

White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*

Once considered rare in the region, sightings becoming increasingly regular, Autumn/Winter.

Two singles on 27th April, 27 45.66S/153 57.39E and 27 46.67S/153 57.50E followed by a single bird on 18th May, 27 47.60S/153 57.63E. A single bird on 20th October, 27 53.31S/153 56.40E constitutes the first Spring record for pelagics from Southport.

Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregatta tropica*

Regular Winter visitor and Spring passage migrant.

As with the previous year recorded in five calendar months, starting with 18th May with 3 singles, 27 48.51S/153 46.06E, 27 46.43S/153 57.46E & 27 47.32S/153 57.57E. Single birds on 15th June, 27 46.34S/153 52.36E and 6th July, 27 51.29S/153 57.21E. 2 single sightings on 17th August, 27 52.67S/153 56.79E & 27 54.52S/153 57.21E. Finally, the largest count for the year with Spring passage on 20th October with at least 10 birds, ranging from 27 55.59S/153 55.95E/ to 27 50.16S/153 57.09E, with a maximum of 3 birds at one time.

Coral Sea/New Caledonian Storm-Petrel *Fregatta sps*

Previous records of striped bellied Storm-petrels in this region thought to be and submitted as New Zealand Storm-Petrel, now known not to be the case and further work to be carried out.

2 individuals sighted on 19 January were of the mystery, so called 'striped' birds of New Caledonia, one of which was typically heavily streaked on the underparts and the other a very lightly streaked bird. 27 53.24S/153 59.95E and 27 55.00S/154 00.50E.

Diomedeiidae

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

Uncommon Winter visitor, recorded most years in low numbers.

On 29th June, two single birds, 27 50.40S/153 51.06E & 27 49.07S/153 49.43E and on 17th August a single at 27 55.93S/153 54.50E, all young birds.

Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida*

Vagrant to Queensland waters.

A single adult bird on 29th June, 27 50.44S/153 51.69E, constitutes only the second record for Queensland.

Shy/White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche cauta/steady*

Uncommon, mainly Winter visitor

An extraordinary record of 2 birds on 20th October, with 1 worn plumaged bird inshore, 27 54.62S/153 34.06E and another individual further out wide 27 48.87S/153 57.15E with the latter bird at least considered to be *T. steady*.

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri*

Uncommon Winter visitor, scarcer than in the past, most likely due to large scale long-line mortality.

Two individual birds, both adults, on 29th June, 27 50.40S/153 51.06E & 27 49.69S/153 47.94E.

Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*

Vagrant to Queensland waters but of increasing frequency in recent years.

A single near adult bird on 29th June, 27 50.44S/153 51.09E only the 3rd record for Southport.

Procellariidae

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*

Until 1996, almost unknown in this region, now considered an annual Winter visitor in low numbers and mainly juvenile birds.

A single juvenile bird close inshore on 29th June, 27 56.37S/153 26.85E.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*

A Winter/Spring visitor most years in low numbers.

A single bird, typically for the region, of the race *D.c. australe* on 29th June, 27 49.95S/153 50.48E.

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*

Sporadic Winter visitor, some years in good numbers.

A single bird on 29th June, 27 49.40S/153 49.88E.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*

Erratic Winter visitor June-August, some years more numerous than in others, depending on sea-surface temps.

A total of 40 sighted on 29th June, maximum 15 together, ranging from 27 56.21S/153 26.46E (just outside the seaway) out to 27 49.80S/153 50.32E. 36 recorded on 6th July ranging from 27 54.00S/153 34.80E out to 27 49.80S/153 56.82E and finally just 4 sighted on 20th July, 27 56.18S/153 38.21E to 27 51.61S/153 51.67E.

Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*

Once considered a very rare Spring/Autumn passage migrant, now appearing annually in low numbers, sometimes in Summer.

Two birds on 9th February, 27 54.07S/153 50.13E.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

Annual Summer visitor to SEQ waters Dec-Apr. usually in inshore waters but sometimes well offshore.

A single bird out wide on 19th January, 27 49.56S/153 58.76E.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

Common Summer visitor and local colony breeder August-April, with large local colonies on Mudjimba Island on the Sunshine Coast and on Cook Island off Fingal Head, Tweed Coast, NSW.

A total of 226 birds sighted on 19th January, ranging from 27 56.10S/153 26.00E out to 28 04.35/154 03.62E.

On 9th February, 423 birds from 27 56.08S/153 26.25E to 27 51.66S/153 50.75E and on 16th February 176 sighted between 27 55.97S/153 26.77E and 27 48.30S/153 57.86E. March 23rd produced 112 birds between 27 56.09S/153 26.03E and 28 00.65S/154 02.30E, whilst the last birds for the first part of the year were recorded on 27th April with just 15, 27 54.97S/153 28.52E to 27 45.17S/153 57.32E. A single on 20th July 27 55.72S/153 27.11E was deemed an early returning bird rather than an over wintering one due to the relative proximity to the local breeding island. 17th August saw the usual rush of returning birds with 215 sighted, 27 56.06S/153 26.18E to 27 55.20S/153 57.39E, however numbers dropped right off on 21st September with just one bird sighted 27 54.15S/153 30.25E. 20th October saw numbers slowly beginning to rise with 35 sighted between 27 55.68S/153 28.02E and 27 48.87S/153 57.15E. 16th November saw numbers back to nearly normal with 289 recorded, 27 55.69S/153 26.81E to 27 45.17S/153 57.35E and on December 21st 342 birds sighted between 27 56.10S/153 27.34E and 27 46.45S/153 58.87E.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

A once common & numerous Summer visitor, September – April, now in much lower numbers.

Another poor year for this species, with none recorded in January. 12 recorded on 9th February, 27 52.99S/

153 45.48E to 27 52.48S/153 50.54E and on 16th February, 19 birds sighted, 27 55.10S/153 30.30E to

27 48.30S/153 57.86E. A single bird only on 23rd March, 27 58.26S/154 01.59E and just 2 birds on 27th April at 27 45.28S/153 57.34E.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Rare, mainly Autumn/Winter visitor.

Two singles sighted on 27th April, 27 46.25S/153 57.47E and 27 46.67S/153 57.50E. A single bird out wide on 16th November, 27 48.40S/153 55.49E.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*

A sometimes numerous Spring passage migrant, with small numbers still trickling through into summer. less so in Autumn.

First records for the year on 27th April with 11 birds sighted, 27 52.77S/153 31.02E to 27 46.67S/153 57.50E.

None then until the Spring when huge wrecks occurred and many birds encountered from inshore to out wide

flocked around the vessel for a feed. A total count of 219 for 20th October from 27 56.00S/15326.00E (the seaway) out to 27 48.87S/153 57.15E. Even larger numbers on 16th November with 372 counted, 27 56.07S/153 26.00E (again the seaway) out to 27 53.39S/153 58.97E. A single bird only on 21st December, 27 50.95S/153 43.41E.

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*

A common, mainly Autumn/ Winter visitor which tends to form large feeding flocks close inshore and not usually encountered in any numbers on pelagic trips.

A relatively poor year for this species, with 2 birds on 19th January, 27 55.79S/153 26.85E, followed by on 16th February, single birds at 27 56.76S/153 27.90E and 2754.77S/153 32.12E and 4 birds at 27 54.19S/153 40.35E. On 18th May a single bird at 27 51.49S/153 35E, on 29th June, 2 birds at 27 56.37S/153 26.85E and finally for the year, a single bird on 17th August, 27 53.44S/153 56.96E.

Hutton's Shearwater *Puffinus huttoni*

A common visitor from New Zealand, occurring any time of the year. Sighted off the Shelf more often than the preceding species.

Records in full, 2 on 9th February, 27 56.11S/153 31.92E and a single bird on 16th February, 27 54.92S/153 34.37E. On 23rd March just a single, 27 55.53S/153 28.50E, the none until 3 singles on 15th June, 27 46.05S/153 53.48E, 27 46.34S/153 52.36E and 27 47.76S/153 48.65E. On 29th June 4 together, 27 56.37S/153 26.85E and on 17th August 2 birds, 27 54.18S/153 31.28E and a single, 27 55.20S/153 57.39E. 2 birds on 21st September, 2747.23S/153 50.98E and 2 single birds On 20th October, 27 55.86S/153 55.31E and 27 55.97S/153 47.92E. Finally, again 2 singles On 21st December, 27 49.21S/153 45.93E and 27 48.44S/153 47.92E

Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*

A common Summer visitor, mainly September-April but has been recorded every month of the year, numbers usually peaking around Feb/Mar. when birds are returning to breeding sites in New Caledonia. Doesn't usually tolerate water temperatures < 23° C.

Large numbers around at the beginning of the year with 93 present on 19th January (max. 11) 27 44.62S/153 56.53E out to 28 04.35S/154 03.62E. 23 recorded on 9th February (max. 4) ranging from 27 56.26S/153 44.78E out to 27 51.66S/153 50.75E and a further 24 birds On 16th February (max. 4), 27 48.88S/153 55.10E to 27 48.64S/153 57.63E. Numbers rose again for 23rd March with 90 sighted (max. 15) 27 45.06S/153 56.95E to 28 07.38S/154 04.26E. Just two singles on 27th April, 27 46.51S/153 57.49E and 27 46.67S/153 57.50E. An early returning bird on 17th August 27 55.93S/153 54.50E then, as often happens, none sighted until 16th November with 18 counted (max. 4) 27 48.40S/153 55.49E out to 27 45.17S/153 57.35E. Finally 21st December saw 33 sighted (max. 6) 27 47.86S/153 53.59E out to 27 46.45S/153 58.87E.

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*

With the species now having been recorded every month of the year and a pattern of occurrence forming, the status of this species has been revised to common visitor to SEQ waters.

Another excellent year for this species and recorded in seven months out of the twelve. 11 birds sighted on 19th January with up to 4 together, 27 48.02S/153 58.28E out to 27 54.96S/154 00.44E. Just two singles on 9th February, 27 55.38S/153 49.73E and 27 56.12S/153 49.48E, numbers up again on 23rd March with 8 sighted between 27 46.27S/153 57.77E and 28 01.36S/154 02.50E. A single bird on 27th April, 27 46.04S/153 57.44E then none until 17th August with 2 birds, 27 51.87S/153 56.63E and 27 53.44S/153 56.96E. Just a single bird on 16th November, 27 47.68S/153 55.75E and 21st December saw the year out with 14 birds, with up to 6 sighted together, 27 45.15S/153 57.60E to 27 46.57S/153 58.86E.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*

An uncommon, mainly Summer visitor but also Autumn/Winter. Another species whose status is under review.

Following on from 2012, good numbers around at the start of the year, beginning with 19th January with 36 sighted (max. 6) from 27 44.62S/153 56.53E to 28 03.93S/154 03.53E. Exceptional numbers on 9th February with 121 counted (max. 50), 27 52.99S/153 45.58E out to 27 51.66S/153 50.75E. Numbers down by 16th February with 18 sighted 27 51.82S/153 56.05E to 27 48.64S/153 57.63E and rising again on 23rd March with

63 counted (max. 6) from 27 45.18S/153 57.14E out to 28 07.38S/154 04.26E. Numbers tailed off the with just two winter sightings, a single bird on 29th June, 27 50.40S/153 51.06E and a single bird again on 6th July 27 49.80S/153 56.82E. All birds sighted considered to be Grey-faced Petrels *P.m. gouldi*.

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*

A common Winter visitor, occurring March- November, breeding on Lord Howe Island some 600 kilometres to the southeast.

An early start to the year with the first returning birds on 23rd March with 4 single birds sighted 27 45.80S/153 57.65E out to 28 07.38S/154 04.26E. As expected numbers rose by 27th April with a count of 12 between 27 46.61S/153 57.14E and 27 46.25S/153 57.47E. The 18th May count was slightly down, with 9 sighted between 27 46.17S/153 54.30E and 27 48.76S/153 57.84E, then onto 15th June when 54 encountered (max. 14) 27 47.45S/153 49.79E to 27 46.05S/153 53.48E. A count of 34 on 29th June (max. 12) ranging from 27 55.29S/153 31.83E out to 27 50.44S/153 51.69E and numbers right down for 6th July with just 4 birds sighted between 27 53.25S/153 49.98E and 27 51.62S/153 57.28E. 20th July saw the numbers rise slightly again with 19 sighted between 27 46.29S/153 48.64E and 27 56.02S/153 52.69E. 17th August produced 109 birds (max. 20) from 27 49.94S/153 48.08E out to 27 55.20S/153 57.39E, while 21st September saw numbers down to 25, ranging from 27 45.85S/153 54.76E out to 27 45.26S/153 57.15E. Last sightings for the year on 20th October with 38 birds counted, 27 55.59S/153 55.95E/ out to 27 50.16S/153 57.09E

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*

A rare passage migrant, mainly in the Spring.

Three birds sighted on 20th October, with a single heading south at 27 52.53S/153 56.58E and another 2 birds in quick succession, also moving south at 27 55.97S/153 43.51E, in shelf waters.

Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*

An uncommon Spring/Autumn passage bird and Summer visitor.

In the first part of the year, single birds on 19th January, 27 56.44S/154 00.87E and on 9th February, 27 52.48S/153 50.54E. In the latter part of the year, a single bird on 20th October, 27 54.08S/153 56.25S and another on 21st December, 27 45.15S/153 57.60E.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*

An uncommon, mainly Summer/Autumn visitor.

A good year for this species, starting with 9th February, 27 52.99S/153 45.58E, 27 52.95S/153 46.26E, 27 53.78S/153 50.21E and 27 55.79S/153 49.59E. two more singles on 16th February, 27 49.84S/153 56.96E and 27 50.62S/153 56.60E. A sighting on 23rd March was the last for the Autumn, 27 45.18S/153 57.14E. In the latter part of the year, 4 birds on 21st December, 27 45.15S/153 57.60E, 27 46.25S/153 58.66E, 27 46.57S/153 58.86E and 27 47.33S/153 55.55E.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*

Uncommon Spring/Autumn passage bird and Summer visitor.

A single sighting only this year, 1 on 9th February, 27 54.54S/153 50.00E.

Common Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

A vagrant to Queensland waters, Winter.

A recently deceased bird found floating on the sea surface on 6th July, 27 55.33S/153 39.52E, or approx. 12 nautical miles from shore, the first record for Southport.

PHALACROCORACIFORMES

Fregatidae

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

Closest breeding Lady Elliott Island. Uncommon in SEQ waters.

An adult female on 16th February, 27 50.80S/153 56.52E, after cyclonic conditions the week before.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*

Closest breeding grounds in the Coral Seas Territory. Rare in SEQ waters, usually after cyclones.

A young 3rd/4th year male on 16th February, 27 49.22S/153 57.27E, after cyclonic conditions the week before.

Sulidae

Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator*

Common Winter visitor, mainly from New Zealand late April-Oct.

Apparently late returning this year, with the first birds not sighted until 15th June with 11, from 27 56.06S/153 26.00E (the seaway) out to 27 51.43S/153 37.82E. Numbers increased to 31 later in the month on the 29th, 27 56.21S/153 to 27 49.80S/153 50.32E, which was the peak count for the winter, quite low. Low numbers for July with just 8 on the 6th, 27 56.06S/153 26.00E out to 27 55.10S/153 40.67E and 12 on the 20th, ranging from 27 55.72S/153 27.11E to 27 56.02S/153 52.69E. Only 8 sighted on 17th August, 27 56.06S/153 26.18E to 27 54.01S/153 32.00E and again low numbers on 21st September with just 6 birds sighted, 27 55.93S/153 26.7E out to 27 54.78S/153 30.04E.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

A rare visitor to SEQ waters most likely from the Coral Sea Territory and sightings on the increase in recent years.

A single bird on 9th February, 27 51.66S/153 50.75E

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Uncommon, with sightings most years.

A single on 17th August, 27 56.07S/153 52.20E.

Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

In most years the least frequently seen of the Cormorants outside the Seaway.

Just one record this year, with 3 birds sighted behind trawler activity on 16th November, 27 55.14S/153 29.47E, approx. 3 nautical miles offshore.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

Regularly sighted, usually on or behind returning trawlers.

All birds sighted around trawler activity, starting with 19th January with 10 around or on one trawler 27 56.10S/153 26.00E and a single bird 27 55.79S/153 26.85E. On 9th February, 5 birds together 27 56.08S/153 26.25E and three more singles from 27 56.12S/153 27.31E to 27 57.02S 153 28.45E. On 16th February, a single bird 27 56.06S/153 26.00E and a large count of 24 on and around a trawler 27 55.97S/153 26.77E. 3 birds on 23rd March, 27 56.15S/153 27.37E were the last ones sighted until 20th October when 2 sighted, 27 56.01S/153 26.65E.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*

As with above but usually in smaller numbers.

On 19th January a single close in 27 56.10S/153 26.00E and 3 birds together, 27 55.79S/153 26.85E. On 9th February 6 birds ranging from 27 56.08S/153 26.25E to 27 57.02S/153 28.45E and on 16th February just a single, 27 55.97S/153 26.77E. 16th March saw 3 together, 27 55.53S/153 28.50E and another 3, 27 53.69S/153 30.39E. A total of 10 sighted on 27th April, from 27 54.97S/153 28.52E out to 27 52.98S/153 30.39E. Few then for the rest of the year with just single birds on 6th July, 27 55.11S/153 28.39E and on 21st September, 27 55.90S/153 26.20E

CHARADRIIFORMES

Stercorariidae

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

Rare Spring/Autumn passage bird.

Another one of those enigmatic dark birds on 20th October, 27 54.78S/153 56.13E.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*

The most often encountered of the group in the region, Spring to Autumn.

A single on 9th February, 27 52.84S/153 46.52E and 2 singles on 16th February, 27 54.37S/153 38.91E & 27 54.54S/153 37.56E. A total of 12 birds on 23rd March ranging from 27 56.09S/153 26.03E out to 28 00.65S/154 02.30E. None then until 16th November with 4 singles 27 54.63S/153 33.20E to 27 47.25S/153 55.88E. Then just 2 birds on 21st December, 27 54.80S/153 31.43E.

Arctic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Most often occurs in inshore waters in SEQ and not recorded on trips as often as the above species.

A poor year, with singles on 16th February, 27 55.37S/153 31.26E and 27th April, 27 46.25S/153 57.47E. None then until 16th November with 2 birds, 27 55.14S/153 29.47E.

Laridae

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus*

Frequent visitor, which can occur any time of year.

A single bird on 23rd March, 27 48.31S/153 58.43E and none then until 15th June, with 10 birds together 27 46.12S/153 53.46E. On 6th July a single at 27 50.75S/153 57.08E and again a single on 20th July at 27 53.83S/153 52.25E. Last sighting for the year on 17th August with singles at 27 51.16S/153 56.50E and 27 55.20S/153 57.39E.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus*

Infrequent visitor to SEQ waters.

A single bird sighted 19th January, 27 48.02S/153 58.28E.

White Tern *Gygis alba*

Uncommon visitor to SEQ waters January-April.

A single bird on 23rd March in continental slope waters, 27 46.27S/153 57.77E.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscata*

Far more commonly encountered than Bridled Tern, occurring throughout the year but mostly Summer months. Only sighted in the first part of the year and the latter part beginning with 19th January when 19 sighted (max. 12) ranging from 27 46.75S/153 57.76E out to 28 04.35S/154 03.62E. On 9th February 25 encountered (max. 16) from 27 56.05S/153 32.34E to 27 51.04S/153 50.93E. Two singles on 16th February, 27 48.64S/153 57.63E and 27 48.97S/153 57.41E. None then until 16th November with a total of 11 sighted between 27 50.23S/153 47.73E and 27 48.40S/153 55.49E and finally 2 singles on 21st December, 27 46.25S/153 58.66E and 27 46.48S/153 58.80E.

Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)

Small numbers breeding locally on the larger sand islands but most birds summer visitors from northern Asia. None at all sighted outside the seaway in the first half of the year with the first sightings on 20th October, a fishing party of 20 in the tide line, 27 55.89S/153 27.18E. A single bird on 21st December just outside the seaway 27 56.05S/153 26.06E.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Although seasonally common in SEQ, not often sighted outside the Seaway.

A single bird on 9th February, 27 56.08S/153 26.25E, just outside the seaway.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Common in SEQ but only rarely sighted outside the Seaway.

As usual sightings were trawler associated, with a single on 27th April, 27 54.97S/153 28.52E and on 18th May, a single bird, 27 54.78S/153 30.20E and 3 birds at 27 53.94S/153 30.55E.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, with small numbers, probably immature birds, overwintering.

As with Little Tern a relatively poor year for this species with 2 single birds out uncharacteristically wide on 18th May, 27 48.23S/153 57.57E and 27 49.84S/153 58.04E. Then none until 21st December with 3 birds together, 27 55.92S/153 26.91E

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

Common, breeds locally on Cook Island off Fingal Head, NSW.

Largest numbers in the first half of the year, starting with 19th January with 74, 27 56.10S/153 26.00E to 27 48.02S/153 58.28E. On 9th February, 96 birds sighted, 27 56.08S/153 26.25E out to 27 52.38S/153 50.59E and on 16th February 52 out to 27 55.10S/153 30.30E. Larger numbers on 23rd March with a total of 153 concentrated around a few returning trawlers up to 4 nautical miles from the seaway. On 27th April 182 recorded, once again concentrated around trawlers near inshore and on 18th May 366, from 27 55.99S/153 26.23E out to 27 46.43S/153 57.46E. Low numbers during the winter months, with just 12 on 15th June out to 27 46.12S/153 53.46E and just 19 on 29th June out to 27 29.95S/153 50.48E. Just 3 birds on 6th July, close inshore and slightly more on 20th July with 36 counted 27 56.11S/153 26.14E to 27 53.83S/153 52.25E. Numbers down again on 17th August with just 7 out to 27 49.43S/153 56.25E and just a few more on 21st September with 20 out to 27 45.26S/153 57.15E. with numbers right down again on 20th October with just 5 sighted out to 27 52.17S/153 56.65E. Numbers rising to 35 on 16th November, 27 56.07S/153 26.00E (seaway) out to 27 47.68S/153 55.75E and finally, with the trawlers active again, 100 on 21st December, 27 56.05S/153 26.06E out to 27 51.43S/153 38.69E.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

Common locally, breeds. Mainly associated with trawler activity offshore.

As usual most birds sighted just off shore around returning trawlers early morning out to about 4-5 nautical miles offshore, with peak numbers on 23rd March (170), 27th April (436) & 18th May (431), with numbers tapering off towards the end of the year when trawler activity ceased. Extraordinary records on 15th June with a single at 27 47.45S/153 49.79E or approx. 23 nautical miles offshore and on 6th July with 25 birds in a foraging party, 27 50.56S/153 57.03E or approx. 28 nautical miles offshore.

Monthly Maxima Table

Species	Jan	Feb*	Mar	Apr	May	Jun*	Jul*	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Red-tailed Tropicbird	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White-tailed Tropicbird	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Polynesian Storm-Petrel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	1	0	13	31	10	26	5	5	12	356	11	0
White-faced Storm-Petrel	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Coral Sea Storm-Petrel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	2	0	10	1	0
Black-browed Albatross	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Campbell Albatross	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shy/White-capped Albatross	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buller's Albatross	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Giant Petrel	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cape Petrel	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Antarctic Prion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairy Prion	0	0	0	0	0	40	40	0	0	0	0	0
Black Petrel	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	226	599	112	15	0	0	1	215	1	35	289	342
Flesh-footed Shearwater	0	31	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	12	1
Sooty Shearwater	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Short-tailed Shearwater	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	219	372	1
Streaked Shearwater	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fluttering Shearwater	2	8	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Hutton's Shearwater	0	3	1	0	0	7	0	3	2	2	0	2
Tahiti Petrel	93	47	90	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	18	33
Kermadec Petrel	11	2	8	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	14
Great-winged Petrel	36	139	63	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Providence Petrel	0	0	5	12	9	88	23	109	25	38	0	0
Mottled Petrel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Gould's Petrel	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
White-necked Petrel	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Black-winged Petrel	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Diving Petrel	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lesser Frigatebird	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Frigatebird	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australasian Gannet	0	0	0	0	0	42	20	8	6	0	0	0
Red-footed Booby	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brown Booby	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Pied Cormorant	4	7	6	10	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Great Cormorant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Little Black Cormorant	11	32	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
South Polar Skua	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Pomarine Jaeger	0	3	12	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2
Arctic Jaeger	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Common Noddy	0	0	1	0	0	10	2	2	0	0	0	0
Black Noddy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White Tern	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sooty Tern	19	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	2
Little Tern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	1
Gull-billed Tern	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caspian Tern	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Crested Tern	74	148	153	182	366	31	39	7	20	5	36	100
Silver Gull	28	54	170	436	431	50	99	2	3	1	1	3

* Denotes more than one trip conducted for that month.

**AN OCCURRENCE OF STEJNEGER'S PETREL *Pterodroma longirostris* (Stejneger 1893)
ON THE EAST COAST OF AUSTRALIA, NOVEMBER 2011
WALBRIDGE, PAUL**

BARC Case No. 720, Verdict - Accepted

Stejneger's Petrel

Pterodroma longirostris [*Aestrelata longirostris* Stejneger, 1893, Province of Mutzu, Hondo, Japan].
Dr. Leonhard Hess Stejneger (1851-1943), (pronounced *staynegger*) Norwegian ornithologist & herpetologist who settled in the USA and became curator of reptiles in the Smithsonian Institute.

Current IUCN Red List category: Vulnerable.

Introduction

Greg Roberts, a journalist by profession and a birder of many years experience, had retired to Ninderry on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland to establish himself as a guide for birders visiting the region, along with his passion for guiding overseas tours. Over the last few years he has built up quite a resume of Sunshine Coast birding spots with an excellent list of sought after birds both by Australian as well as overseas birders. What was missing was the pelagic component and Greg had done some searching around the area looking for a suitable vessel, seemingly without success.

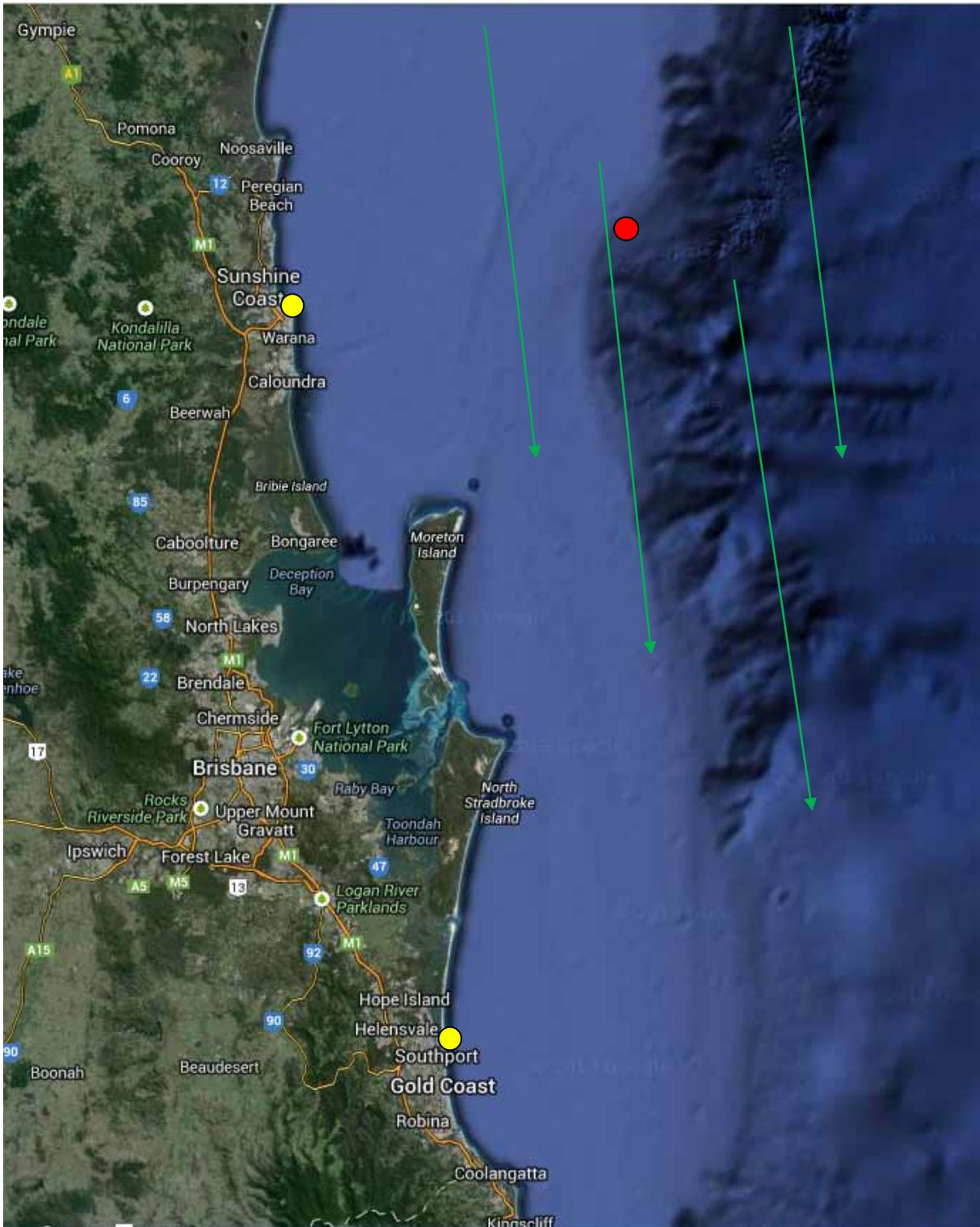
As a pelagic organiser, initially out of Brisbane and since 1995 Southport, on the Gold Coast I had, over the years, built up quite a list of contacts. The vessel I use from Southport, the 'M.V. Grinner' is skippered by Craig Newton the shark netting contractor for the Gold Coast beaches and one of the deckies, Trevor 'Paddy' Dimond showed particular interest in our sea-birding forays out into the southern Coral Sea. A couple of years ago Paddy relocated to the Sunshine Coast to take up the shark netting beach protection contract for the area stretching from Mooloolaba south to Caloundra. Paddy's vessel the 'CAT-A-PULT' is a 30ft Noosa Cat, well appointed, fast and stable, able to get the extra miles needed to get off the Continental Shelf on this part of the coastline.

So, at the start of 2011, I put Greg in contact with Paddy so they could work out some kind of agreement to start conducting pelagics out of Mooloolaba and this came to fruition with the first pelagic conducted on 10th July 2011, with the trip being a resounding success. Although the Southport operation has a close association with SOSSA in Wollongong, Mooloolaba does not at this point in time but the two venues are not in competition with Greg preferring to run his trips a couple of weeks prior to the monthly Southport cruises so they actually complement one another.

With the prevailing La Nina conditions, the Spring of 2011 had been a strange one with the southward trans-equatorial migration of several species seemingly somewhat delayed, e.g. Wilson's Storm-Petrel numbers normally peaking in September not eventuating until late October. The October trip from Southport overall was very quiet and not what we had come to expect and in complete contrast to October 2010. Greg Roberts in the meantime had organised the second pelagic from Mooloolaba for November 5th and I was keen for both Brian Russell and myself (both photographers and birders) to participate as Greg had indicated that there were spaces available. I contacted Greg in this regard and was informed that the trip was full and I booked both Brian and myself on as reserves in the final week leading up to the trip.

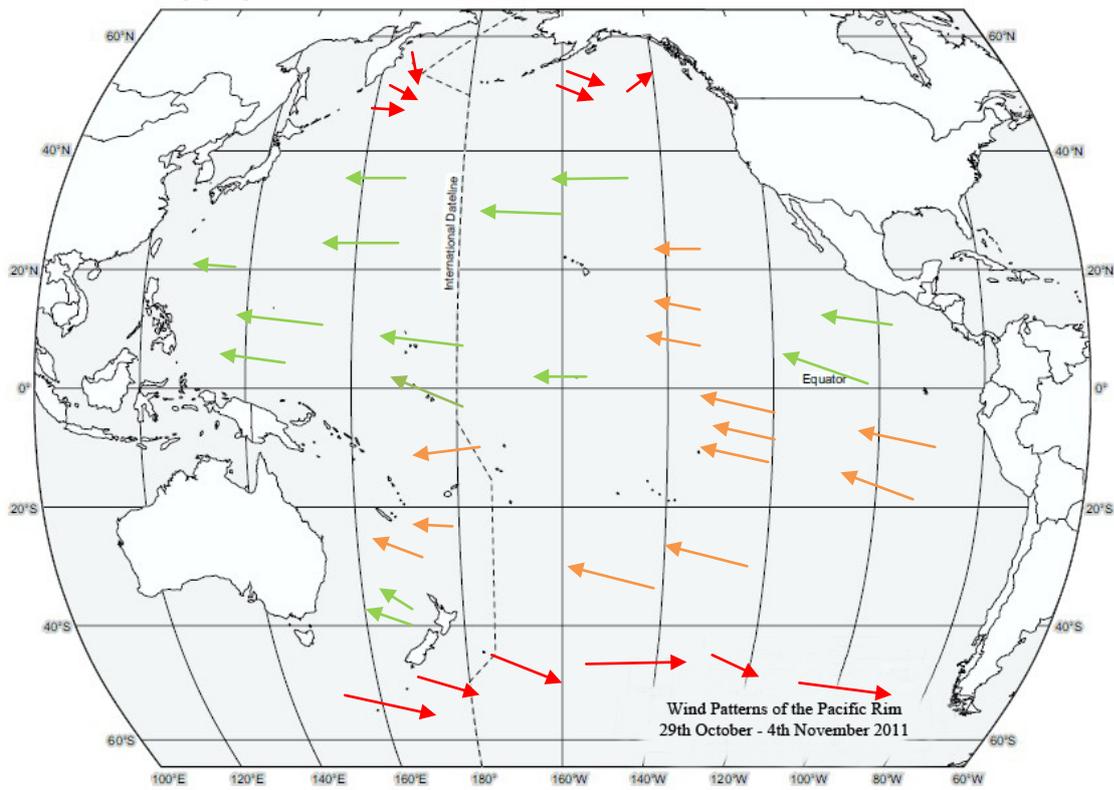
With just a couple of days to spare, Greg e-mailed me and informed me that both Brian and myself were on for the trip. Leading up to the day the weather conditions hadn't looked good but the decision was made to meet at the wharf, where, on the morning everything looked good for a full day out on the ocean. As the day panned out it turned out to be one of the more extraordinary pelagic trips in memory and with a new seabird for Australia, one not at all expected, in the offing.

Mooloolaba is situated some 140 kilometres or 90 miles north of the other pelagic venue of southeast Queensland, Southport and is that much closer to the southern edge of the Great Barrier Reef, with the Continental Shelf arching out eastwards because of this. Therefore the Shelf-break is a few nautical miles further out to travel, luckily the Cat-A-Pult is a Noosa Cat, capable of some speed and even with the prevailing conditions of the day we were able to travel out reasonably comfortably at 18 knots.

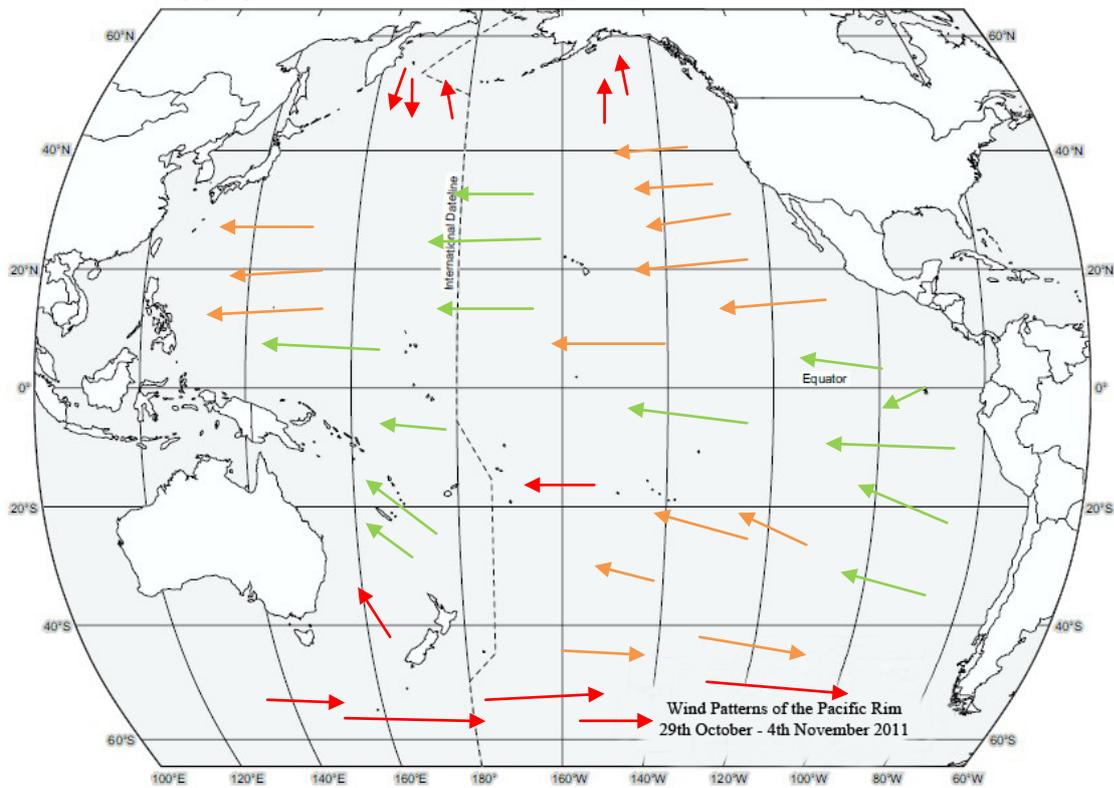


The above map depicts coastal South East Queensland, from Noosa in the north to the QLD/NSW border to the south. It clearly shows the Continental Shelf (paler blue) and the 100 fathom line shelf-break. The two yellow markers represent the two pelagic venues i.e. Mooloolaba to the north and Southport in the southernmost part of the satellite image. The red marker represents the position of the vessel at the time the Stejneger's Petrel appeared, approximately 36 nautical miles ENE of Mooloolaba, WGS 26 32.43S/153 46.04E. The green arrowed lines represent the general direction, the Mottled Petrels and Stejneger's Petrel were travelling on the day, predominately in a SSE movement, roughly parallel to the coastline.

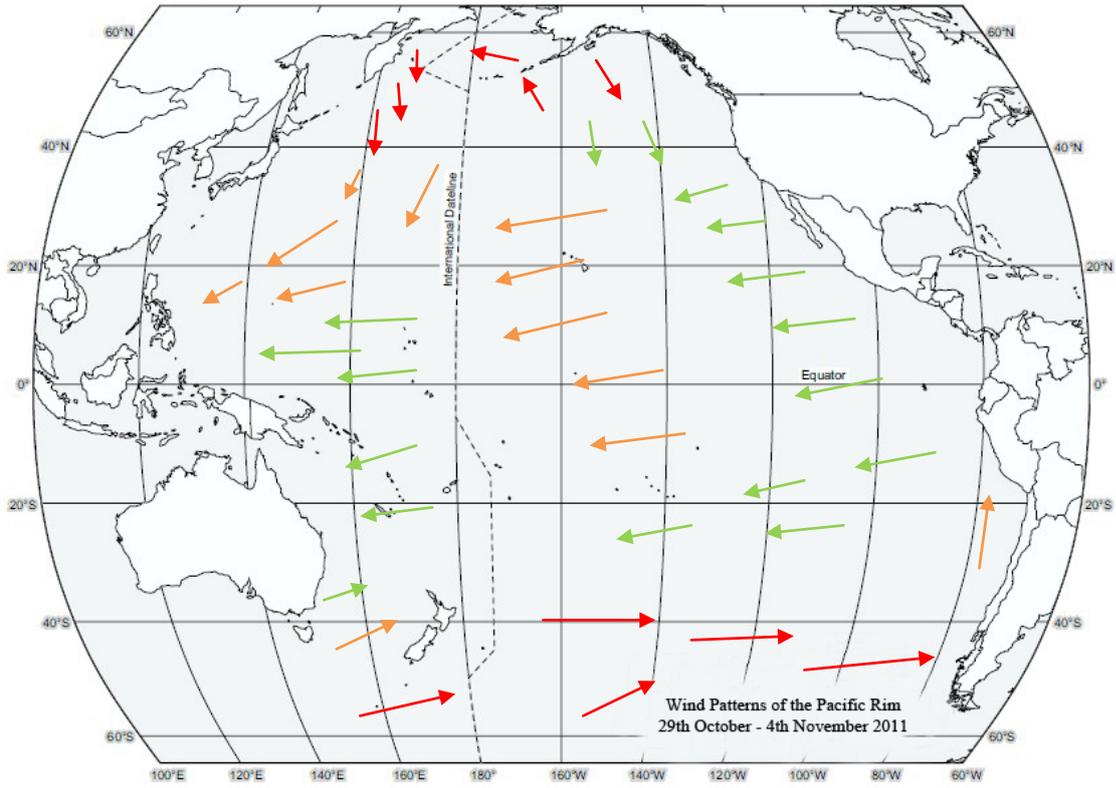
Wind Charts for the Pacific Rim leading up to 5th November 2011



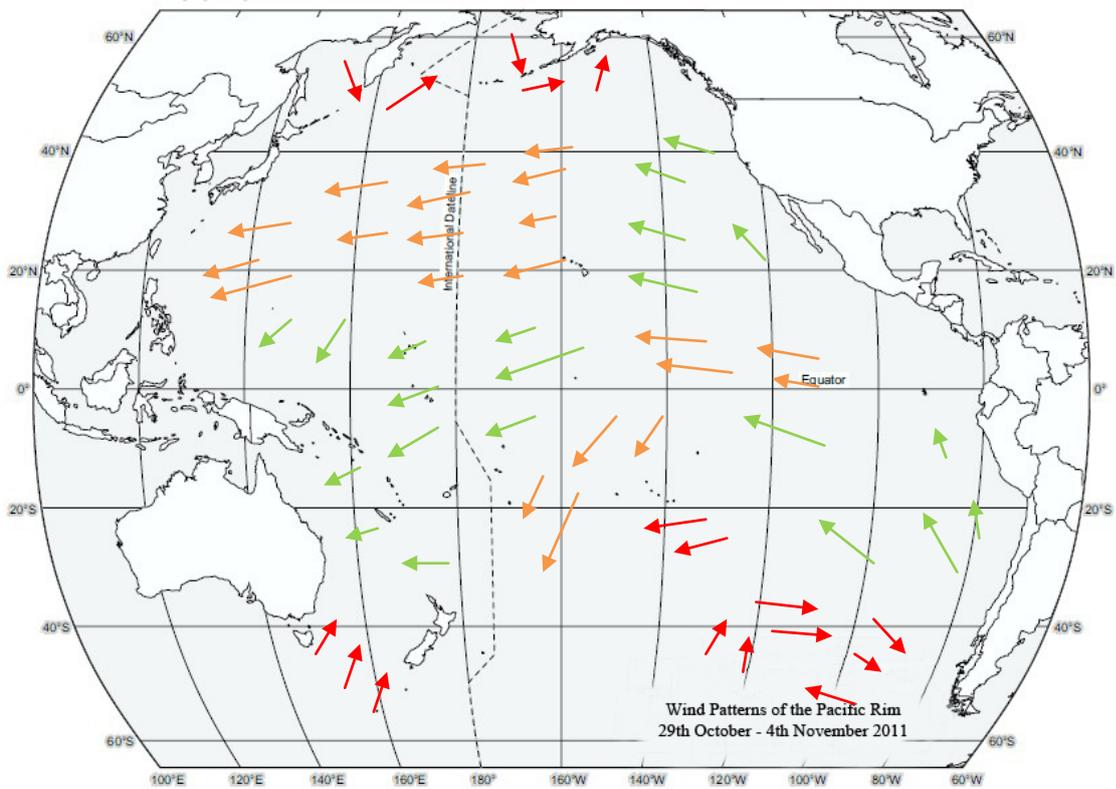
Saturday 29th October 2011, 1600 hrs



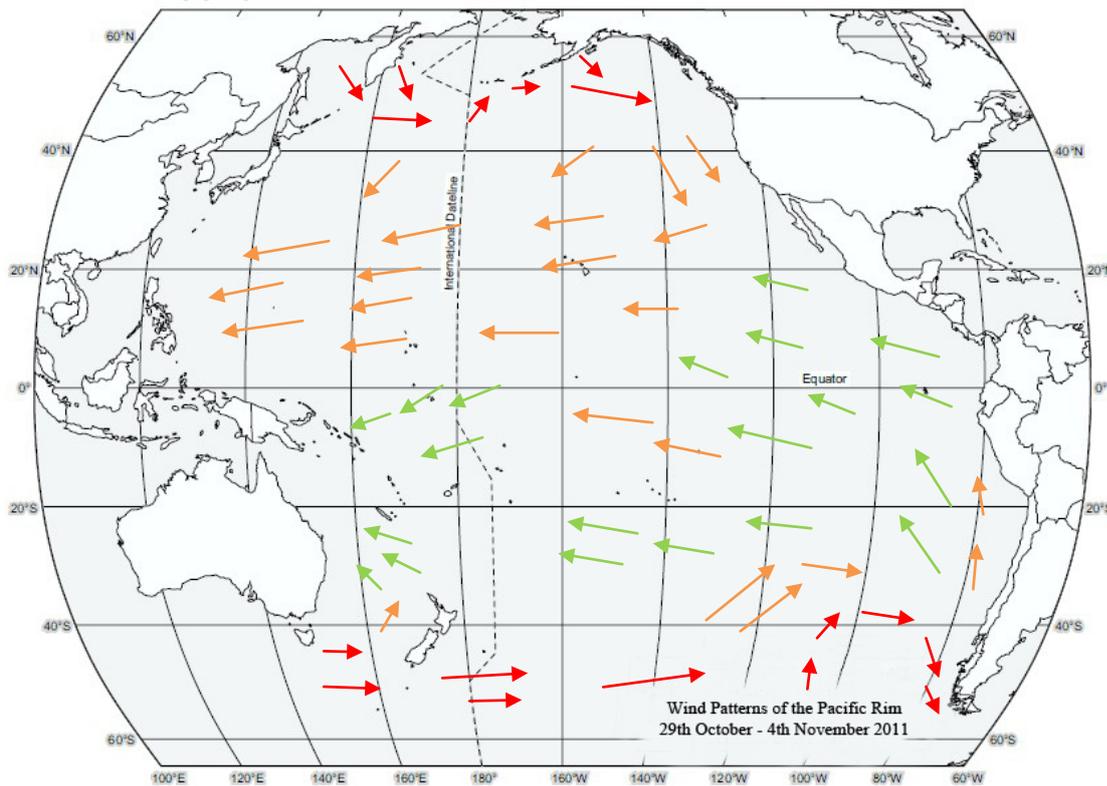
Monday 31st October 2011, 2100 hrs



Wednesday 2nd November 2011, 2100 hrs



Thursday 3rd November 2011, 2100 hrs



Friday 4th November 2011, 2100 hrs

Legend:

- Beaufort force 0-4 Calm to moderate breeze (1 – 16 knots)
- Beaufort force 5-6 Fresh to strong breeze (17 – 27 knots)
- Beaufort force 7-9 Near gale to strong gale (28 – 47 knots)
- Beaufort force 10-11 Storm to violent storm (48 – 63 knots)

The above wind charts, initially accessed from the internet ('Magicseaweed') and then modified by the author have been added to the notes as an aid to possibly indicate why the Stejneger's Petrel and other birds also present happened to be travelling down the east coast of Australia on 5/11/2011. The charts show wind patterns/strengths both north and south of the Equator, in the Pacific Ocean during the week leading up to the day of the sighting. They clearly depict N-NE winds in the north Pacific veering to easterly approaching the Equator and to the south, emanating from the eastern Pacific Ocean, with wind strengths varying up to moderate and higher.

On the day,

Weather Conditions: A high centred just off the east Australian coastline brought moderate to strong ESE-SE winds during the week leading up to the trip. On the day, light to moderate winds ESE 10-15 knots. Moderate cloud cover with some distant rain squalls heading coastward. Visibility generally good, with some haze on the horizon. Maximum air temperature approx. 27° C, barometer 1022 hPa.

Sea Conditions: Calm seas on a moderate easterly swell to 1.5 metres throughout the day. There was no water temperature reading device on board the vessel but sea-surface temperature reading was obtained for the region from the Internet at approx. 24° C out at widest drift point.

The vessel headed out ENE of Mooloolaba Seaway and headed directly for the Barwon Banks, a large undersea structure more than halfway across the shelf, well known to anglers. Once this area has been crossed the shelf falls away quite quickly until the shelf-break and into continental slope waters to where we were headed. Nothing much of note on the way out, mainly foraging Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Crested Terns.

After crossing the Shelf-break we headed out into deeper water and finally stopped for a drift and after a few minutes a lone Tahiti Petrel appeared close to the vessel with a few Wedge-tailed Shearwaters at approximately 1043 hrs. and hung around for a few minutes. Just a few minutes later at 1050 hrs the first of what was to become a constant stream of Mottled Petrels appeared, an event not witnessed in south east Queensland waters since October 26th 1996 off Southport. What was different this time though, was that a good proportion of these birds stopped to feed in the now substantial slick as did some of the Short-tailed Shearwaters now passing through. Although Short-tailed Shearwaters are often observed to momentarily break off to feed in the slick while on migration in southern Queensland waters particularly on days with lighter winds, for Mottled Petrels to do so, was without precedent.

Mottled Petrels were now appearing in groups and at 1200 hrs as a loose group of five approached to the rear of the vessel from the north east, a smaller 'cookilaria' type appeared with them lower to the sea surface generally and unlike most of the Mottled Petrels merely flew past the stern, performed one loop around the vessel with another fly past astern before quickly disappearing to the south. As often happens, different observers pick up on different plumage characteristics and so it happened here. Greg Roberts, picking up the dark headed appearance of the bird immediately shouted Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*, whilst almost simultaneously on seeing the obvious neck collar I shouted out Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*, both of which could be expected at this time of year. However, as the bird flew past astern of the vessel it was quite obviously too white in the underwing and at the same time also too dark in the head, so Black-winged Petrel was immediately ruled out.

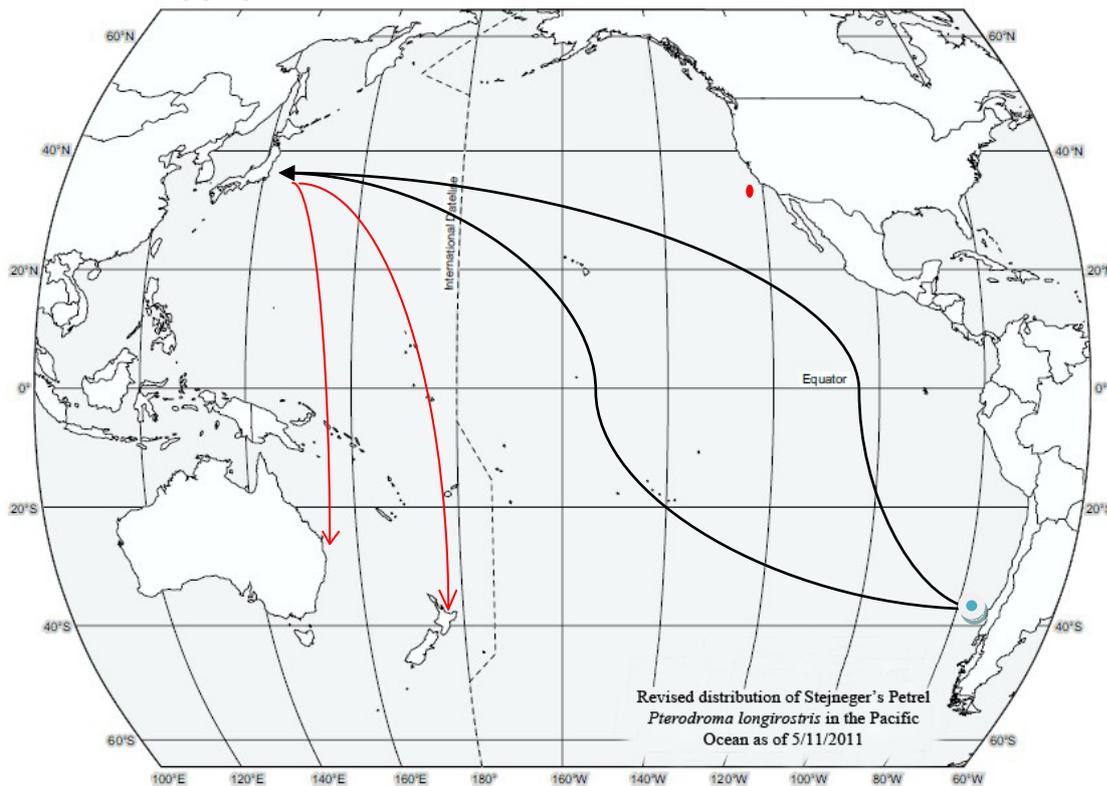
With the bird making just one other quick circuit before disappearing south, I concentrated on getting some photographs as did Brian Russell and possibly one or two others on board. Because of this I didn't really get to see any more real detail of the bird and as no-one else seemed to challenge the ID the bird went down in the notes initially as Gould's Petrel. However, although I didn't dispute the ID, something wasn't quite right, the bird to me lacked that solid black 'block-headed' look of Gould's Petrel and on a few occasions on the way back across the shelf I viewed the images on the LCD screen on the back of my camera but the images I had were too small to bring out the detail necessary.

That evening, after downloading all the images of the day onto my large 18" laptop and after first viewing the 'Fregetta' storm-petrel images, confirming that it was after all a very white bellied Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica*, that we had encountered I reviewed the images of the 'cookilaria' type petrel. Immediately, I could see on magnifying the image that this bird was unlike any I had observed before with the underwing appearing more like a Cook's/Pycroft's Petrel with a minimal amount of black showing from the carpal into the coverts. I then looked at the head pattern and ruled out Cook's Petrel straight away and immediately rang Greg Roberts to inform him that we might have possibly observed the first sighting of Pycroft's Petrel for Australia and that I would send out images the next day. I then consulted Harrison and one point immediately stood out and that was the white 'comma' intrusion behind the eye, at the base of the collar, a diagnostic feature for Stejneger's Petrel.

On sending the images out to others the following day the response was an immediate confirmation from Greg Roberts et. al. that we had observed the first Stejneger's Petrel ever in Australian waters. I had used a Canon EOS 7 D camera combined with a Canon EF 70-200 F 2.8 'L' lens and I asked Brian Russell who had used an almost identical setup but with a 2X Canon convertor attached, if he had obtained any images. At the time of the images being taken, the vessels' bow was pointed eastward, I was positioned on the starboard (southern) side and Brian more to the port (northern) side. A combination of angle to the sun and the extra magnification from his camera setup saw Brian achieving even better images than I had obtained.

The next three weeks was spent researching this species, i.e.; current known distribution, breeding and migratory patterns and vagrancy. Although *P. longirostris* hadn't been sighted in Australian waters before, there had been several occurrences of beach washed specimens in New Zealand, not that far away to the southeast of continental Australia. I contacted a friend in New Zealand, Brent Stephenson, who suggested I contact Dr Paul Scofield who was kind enough to provide me with the data I sought after. By the 28th November 2011 I had the necessary information I needed for a submission and a standard Brisbane Seabird Study Group forms a-c was completed, converted to PDF and sent to BARC. The record was formally accepted and a memorandum sent to the Director of BirdLife Australia and myself on 14/10/2012. I then contacted concerned parties who were witness to this extraordinary sighting on the day. The BARC summary can be accessed at www.tonypalliser.com/barc/summaries/SUMM720.htm

Breeding & Distribution of Stejneger's Petrel



- Breeding grounds
- ← Displaced migration route
- ← Normal migration route

Stejneger's Petrel *Pterodroma longirostris*, has a current IUCN Red List category of Vulnerable, due to its breeding range being restricted to one island and the present threat of introduced predators, Feral Cat *Felis catus*, Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* and House Mouse *Mus musculus*, plus habitat threatening herbivores such as introduced goats. The population was estimated in 1986 (some 25 years ago) at 131,000 pairs & perhaps 400,000 birds in total (Brooke 2004) the population being listed as stable, despite the recognized threats.

Stejneger's Petrel breeds on Alejandro Selkirk Island in the Juan Fernandez group off the coast of Chile, South America, in mixed colonies with the larger Juan Fernandez Petrel, a species that has been sighted once in Australia, when one was captured and photographed at Cessnock, NSW, October 1988. Two other claimed sightings of *P. externa*, in 1985 both off the southern NSW coast were either withdrawn or not substantiated with supporting notes. Stejneger's Petrel, until now has not been claimed as sighted in Australian waters, or found as a beach cast specimen.

Stejneger's Petrel is a trans-equatorial migrant, present during the Austral summer months, October – April/May around its breeding grounds in the Juan Fernandez archipelago. It then disperses, post breeding, to the North Pacific, from where it heads west to the seas off Japan, rarely reaching the north American coast with the first sighting off California on 17th November 1979 (McCaskie, G., Roberson, D.). There have been numerous sightings around the Hawaiian Islands in the central north Pacific, the majority of which occurring late Sep-mid Oct. on the return migration but there are the odd June records, presumably stragglers still heading NW but possibly birds overwintering there. There have been several beach cast specimens in New Zealand, mostly North Island, between 3 December 1961 and 2005, all in summer.

The following list was provided by Dr Paul Scofield, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at Canterbury Museum; Baring Head, 3rd December 1961; Falla 1962. Ohope Beach (2) 5th January 1962; Falla 1963. Turakina Valley 1963; Checklist 2010. East of Hawkes Bay 1978; Jenkins 1981. Ruakaka Beach 1980; Checklist 2010. Northland 1981; Checklist 1990. Ninety Mile Beach (3) December 1983; Powlesland 1985. Pukerua Bay 30th December 1989, Tennyson; Guest 1991, Powlesland *et al.* 1992. Ninety Mile Beach, Northland 2005; Howell & Esler 2007. Off Milford Sound February 2006; an as yet unsubstantiated sighting, still not submitted to OSNZ Rare Birds Committee.

Description





All above photos of Stejneger's Petrel taken by P.Walbridge off Mooloolaba 5/11/2011.

Note particularly in these photos, the longish, fairly slender bill, the white notch between the eye patch and the collar and a more clear cut 'M' marking on the mainly pale grey upperparts, along with the broad blackish terminal tail band. The underwing shots clearly show the minimal amount of blackish feathering in the carpal/covert region and note the overall more delicate appearance compared to most of the 'cookilaria' types, although with a short necked jizz more akin to Pycroft's Petrel. All the shots taken on the day showed the individual keeping fairly low to the sea-surface, not showing the swooping, dynamic flight typical of most 'cookilaria' types, such as Gould's and Black-winged Petrels.

Comparison with other similar species of *Pterodroma* of the region.



Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*. Mooloolaba 5/11/2011. Paul Walbridge.

Mottled Petrel was the predominant species of pterodroma moving south on the day and providing a useful comparison to the Stejneger's Petrel, with the two species being in the same field of view. An obviously larger more bulky petrel with a more powerful flight pattern compared to Stejneger's Petrel. Head and bill much bulkier with a more uniform grey head with dark eye patch and a different shaped, less obvious collar. The upperparts, although superficially similar to Stejneger's, in fresh plumage has a frosty look on the inner forewing and secondaries, the tail also lacking an obvious terminal band. The underparts immediately distinguish Mottled Petrel with the dark grey belly patch and robustly broad covert bar on the underwing.



Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*. Britannia Sea Mount 15/4/2012. Paul Walbridge.

Gould's Petrel is the species that the Stejneger's Petrel was initially mistaken for, although Gould's Petrel is a more robust bird with a more solid black head and hood, with some slightly melanistic individuals showing a partial to complete collar. However, Gould's Petrel never shows the white notch behind the eye patch. The upperparts are fairly similar but with darker secondaries and much less obvious terminal tail band. The underparts need more caution shown, as Gould's Petrel is very variable, with sometimes quite a thin black covert bar which can wear heavily and broaden to show the darker bases. Stejneger's typically have minimal amount of black feathering in this area but with wear can approach fresh plumaged or paler Gould's in extent of black feathering. Gould's Petrel also show more solid blackish in the wing-tips in the underwing.



Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*. Southport 17/12/2011. Paul Walbridge.

Also initially confused with Black-winged Petrel because of the large prominent grey collar but although Black-winged Petrel has the contrasting blackish eye patch, the head overall is a much paler grey and there is a slight supercilium similar to Cook's Petrel. Also Black-winged Petrel is a bulkier, larger bird than both Cook's and Stejneger's Petrels, with a jizz and flight pattern similar to Gould's Petrel, this species does also however have a broadish black terminal tail band, similar to Stejneger's. The underwing though is quite different to Stejneger's, Cook's and Pycroft's Petrels in having a broad blackish trailing edge to the secondaries and a very broad prominent black carpal/covert bar, as with Gould's Petrel the underwing wing-tips are more solid blackish. Like some other 'cookilaria' types in worn plumage, Black-winged Petrel can sometimes show a pale nuchal collar.



Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cooki*. Hauraki Gulf NZ, December 2009. Rob Morris.

Cook's Petrel has a longer winged more slender necked jizz than Stejneger's Petrel but with a similarly long, slender bill. The upperparts are again quite pale grey, with a prominent 'W' pattern and broad blackish terminal tail band. The underwing pattern is also similar, especially with a Stejneger's in a more worn plumage. The main difference lies with the head pattern, with Cook's Petrel having an overall more uniform pale grey head, lacking the white frons of Stejneger's Petrel and because of this the dark eye patch is more prominent. There is a distinct lack of a collar in this species and thus this species is lacking the prominent white tick behind the eye-patch.



Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti*. Mercury Islands NZ. December 2009. Rob Morris.

Of all the small *cookilaria* type pterodroma petrels regularly occurring in the SW Pacific Pycroft's Petrel is the one most likely to be confused with Stejneger's Petrel. It has a similar overall jizz, except for the broader neck larger headed appearance and the bill is shorter and of finer build. Although the head appears darker than Cook's Petrel, it lacks the dark cap of Stejneger's Petrel and the forehead is darker, with the dark collar being less prominent and lacking the tear drop mark behind the eye patch. The underwing in particular is very similar to *P. longirostris*, as is the overall upperparts, except for the mainly greyer head and the terminal blackish band on the tail is narrower and far less obvious.



White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*. Southport 16/2/2013. Paul Walbridge.

Overall, White-necked Petrel and its eastern Pacific counterpart the Juan Fernandez Petrel *Pterodroma externa* are considerably larger than the 'cookilaria' group but at a distance it can be hard to judge at times. Both species are fairly clean cut grey and blackish on the upperparts, with White-necked in particular having a prominent blackish cap, although the obvious white collar distinguishes it. Juan Fernandez lacks the prominent hood and white cervical collar and both species lack an obvious tail band. The underwing is where confusion might set in as both White-necked and Juan Fernandez Petrels have a thin trailing edge and quite minimal amounts of black feathering in the carpal/covert area. However given good views of either, the overall size, jizz and more leisurely flight pattern, should discount both.

P. longirostris is a small, 'cookilaria' type gadfly petrel, quite a bit smaller and of more delicate build than the Mottled Petrels *Pterodroma inexpectata*, which were present on the day in some numbers. Flight, direct and fairly typical of a small 'cookilaria' type but didn't appear to do much high banking, keeping mainly low to the water, this could have been due to the fairly calm conditions on the day of its appearance, although several of the Mottled Petrels were observed to arc to quite a few metres of elevation.

Bare parts: Bill; black, moderately robust for a 'cookilaria' type and fairly long, legs and feet not seen, eye appeared dark. Head; lores and frons right up to top of forehead white, with a blackish eye-patch, rest of head blackish brown down over the nape. A dark grey fairly broad collar from behind the head through the shoulder and into the upper breast. Between the head and the collar was a white, sharp white wedge mark.

Upperparts; mantle down to lower back, pearly grey with pale, outer fringes to the feathers, lower back to upper tail coverts, blackish as a continuation of the dark wing-bar. Tail, darker greyish brown with a broad, dark blackish brown terminal band, no white noted or detected in the outer retrices. Upperwing; inner wing same as mantle, primaries, slaty coloured, with greater coverts and secondaries pale grey. Lower edge of greater coverts fringed whitish. A broad blackish diagonal band went from the carpal joint area down and across to the lower back, producing the classic 'M' pattern.

Underparts; from chin to under tail coverts, entirely white, save for the dark grey collar intruding into the upper breast and blackish tail feathers. Underwing, reminiscent of the much larger White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis* appearing almost entirely white with a thin, dark trailing edge along the secondaries to the primaries, which were dusky greyish with white intrusions. Along the forewing from the base of the primaries two small dark greyish marks, with a more prominent black bar appearing at the carpal joint but quickly tapering off into a faint, diffuse, greyish line.

The only other species *P. longirostris* could be possibly confused with are the other small 'cookilaria' petrels of the southern Pacific Ocean. These are, Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera*, Collared Petrel *P. brevipes*, Black-winged Petrel *P. nigripennis*, Chatham Island Petrel *P. axillaris*, Cook's Petrel *P. cookii*, Pycroft's Petrel *P. pycrofti*, and De Filippi's Petrel *P. defilippiana*.

Gould's Petrel is larger, with a more solid blackish head, lacking the white 'apostrophe' mark behind the eye. On the underwing more obvious, solid carpal/covert bar. Collared Petrel, roughly same as for Gould's Petrel but with less distinct 'M' on upperwing & variable underwing and underparts, in all plumages darker than Stejneger's Petrel. Black-winged Petrel also larger, with more uniform grey coloured paler head, darker upperparts with less obvious 'M' configuration, also an even more solid collar on the shoulder. Underwing has a huge, solid black diagonal bar, with broader blackish trailing edge. Chatham Island Petrel, also larger, extremely rare with restricted range and diagnostic underwing, a dark slaty wedge-shaped 'armpit'.

Both Cook's and Pycroft's Petrels are of similar size to Stejneger's and have a similar underwing pattern but the amount of black more solid and substantial. Cook's Petrel has more uniform paler grey head with a more obvious eye-patch with a supercilium and no collar, it also has paler/whitish outer retrices in the tail. Pycroft's Petrel in fresh plumage is darker headed than Cook's but not as obvious as Stejneger's, also it has a faint supercilium and lacks the white intrusion behind the eye, also shorter billed and a different, shorter winged jizz. De Filippi's Petrel more like Pycroft's in jizz (shorter winged, longer tailed) with a paler head pattern and a more obvious eye patch but with a completely grey upper tail and with no terminal blackish tail band. Also De Filippi's Petrel is of stockier build, with a larger head and more robust bill.

The possibility of the reoccurrence of Stejneger's Petrel in eastern Australian waters

In the Queensland Ornithological Society issue of 'The Sunbird' Vol. 29 No. 3 December 1999, the author details an account of a significant occurrence of Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata* southerly migration, witnessed from two venues, on the Australian east coast, namely Southport and Wollongong on 26-27th October 1996. This event was witnessed over two days involving numbers of this species never before witnessed off the east coast and occurred after similar weather patterns to the event involving similar numbers of birds off the Sunshine Coast of Queensland on November 5th 2011.

Significantly, large numbers of Short-tailed Shearwaters were recorded in southward migration in the 1996 event, a species that winters in the nutrient rich Bering Sea along with Mottled Petrel. Although the same numbers of Short-tailed Shearwater weren't encountered on 5/11/2011, there were a few passing through with the relatively large numbers of Mottled Petrel. Stejneger's Petrel winters in seas south east of Japan and would

also at this time be heading for the breeding grounds in the southern hemisphere, albeit in a more south easterly direction to islands off the coast of Chile.

The author suggests, that with the prevailing wind conditions in the north Pacific and to the south at the time, significant numbers of both Short-tailed Shearwater and in particular Mottled Petrel were pushed to the south west, toward Japanese waters. Travelling further south it is highly likely that returning Stejneger's Petrels were affected by the same prevailing conditions and at least one, probably a few, found themselves caught up in the Mottled Petrel movement. This is something that can happen periodically and is almost certainly backed up by the number of Stejneger's Petrel beach cast records over the years in New Zealand. So, what of the likelihood of another Australian sighting of Stejneger's Petrel? The author asked the same question of the Mottled Petrel after the extraordinary event of October 1996 and a similar movement did indeed reoccur in November 2011. So the answer is, a qualified yes and with due diligence, relevant prevailing weather patterns and the use of modern recording equipment, it should only be a matter of time before another Stejneger's Petrel is sighted in Australian waters.

The evolution of offshore Sea-birding

One only has to read the account of McCaskie and Roberson and their first sighting of Stejneger's Petrel off California in 1979 to understand the great difficulties in identifying these small *cookilaria* type petrels when seen only briefly at sea. There were 38 observers aboard this vessel with well known birders such as Jon L. Dunn, Richard A Erickson and not the least Richard Stallcup in addition to the two authors above. Each one picked up on different characteristics of the bird some in agreement with others, some not. The other species of *cookilaria* sighted on the day was Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* and although the two species are very similar they knew they had seen something different but what? To compound the problem none of the observers had any experience with *cookilaria* petrels. All they had to go on was comparison of notes and sketches taken on the day. With some follow up research the conclusion was that they must have observed a Stejneger's Petrel.

So what has changed between then and recent times? Quite simply, technology and particularly the way we have embraced it, not only that, this technology has become well within the reach of most birders in one form or another. I'm talking about the transition from film to digital photography, initially in the early half of the first decade of the 21st century. From McCaskies' account I can only conclude that no photographs were taken and at that time only film was available and autofocus was just an idea and anyway the bird was visible for a mere 30 seconds.

I have been an avid birder since 1962 and a keen photographer since 1971, when, on joining the Royal Australian Navy I earned enough money to buy my first SLR camera. Now, with all this time spent at sea I could get all these amazing images of seabirds, or not. Over the years I did get some half decent photos but it was extremely difficult to photograph birds that just seemed to zigzag and bob up and down, further compounded by an often heaving deck of the particular ship I was on. Also, when I started to go on pelagics in the early 1990s, pre auto-focussing and digital, one would take maybe 3-4 rolls of film and then wait in hope that maybe that Cape Petrel shot was perfectly in focus, and the exposure was correct, not to mention the expense involved with the purchase of film, then the processing.

In this day and age, with the latest auto-focussing technology and high speed in camera processing combined with superb, high density sensors and high capacity ultra fast memory cards, one no longer has to wait to see a result, just review the images with the increasingly larger, higher definition rear screens. In addition, certain vessels such as the MV Grinner, have had relatively large LCD monitors fitted, for an onboard preview of JPEG images. Also, one no longer needs to worry about the cost involved with processing, after the initial cost of the card(s) with proper care and maintenance these cards will last almost indefinitely. It is no secret or surprise, that the ongoing development of digital camera equipment, DSLRs in particular, has seen an upsurge in seabird records and accredited positive identification in recent years.

With a plethora of high class images now available, bird artists have an amazing array of material at their disposal to weave their artistic wizardry for field guides and author/photographers have an almost unlimited supply for publishers to issue an ever increasing production of photographic guides. Some of these guides are broad ranging, some more specific to a particular group of seabirds, either way, the standard of illustrated and photographic material now available to the general public has lifted to a new level and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

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Seabirds of Kiritimati Island

Jon Norling 2014

I was fortunate to visit Kiritimati (pronounced Christmas) Island (KI) for a week in July 2013 in pursuit of my twin interests of fly-fishing and bird watching. Within fishing circles, KI is widely known as a great destination for catching large numbers of Bonefish. It is less well known as being the largest coral atoll in the world (388km²) and having a large seabird colony.

Unlike the Christmas Island often appearing in the national news, KI is located in the Pacific Ocean, only 2°N of the equator and due south of Hawaii. By virtue of a large kink introduced to the International Date Line in 1995, its time clock is 24 hours in advance of Hawaii.

KI forms part of the Line Island chain and is located within the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kiribass). This country comprises 33 islands spanning a total distance of 4,700km, a distance greater than the width of Australia. Its population of only 100,000 persons is described as Micronesian, which is quite different from the Melanesians (such as of PNG and Fiji) or Polynesians (such as of Samoa and Tonga). It is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world and facing significant effects from future sea level rises as a result of the islands' land masses averaging only 2m above sea level (and studies show sea level rises have been averaging 2.9mm per annum in this area – much higher than the global average).

On KI (population of only 5,000), it was evident that the islanders suffer significant health problems, mainly from poor water quality, resulting in limited life spans. Their local language is Gilbertese, although English is also widely spoken, particularly by those regularly coming into contact with tourists. Facilities are very primitive, with some not having access to electricity or reticulated water. Access is limited to one flight per week from each of Fiji and Hawaii. Due to the poor economy, the small volumes of tourists are welcomed and prices are cheap (currency is AUD).

KI is shaped like a wide-open shifting spanner. The handle points into the prevailing ESE winds, with a very large lagoon (of similar size to the land mass) contained within the open part of the spanner to the WNW. The island's low profile has resulted in much of the island comprising hyper saline brine ponds and salt pans. The island is located within an equatorial dry zone, with annual rainfall averaging less than 1m. Consequently, the vegetation comprises drought-tolerant low shrub land and grassland, with Coconut Palm plantations also being a dominant feature (copra is the island's main export).

KI may be better known as a nuclear testing site in the 1950s and 1960s by the UK and USA. There are conflicting reports as to whether these tests were undertaken over land or over the sea. It is not known whether these tests adversely affected the seabird population in the area.

Historically, subsistence egg collecting by locals comprised a major threat to the seabird colonies. More recently, the introduction of rats and cats (and to a lesser extent pigs) to the island has had a devastating effect on the breeding colonies, particularly of the many ground-nesting birds. There was also a major collapse in the local seabird population in 1982/3 resulting from the mega-El Nino event at that time, which caused abnormally warm water temperatures (reduction in nutrients, which led to significant reductions in local fish and squid stocks) and high rainfall (flooding of nests) in the central Pacific.

The government declared KI a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1975, which effectively put a stop to subsistence egg collecting. Access to five motus (small vegetated islets in the main lagoon) has also been restricted, with these comprising significant nesting sites for the Endangered and other seabirds on the island. Attempts to eradicate rats and cats have met with little success and it is now illegal for locals to have possession of an unneutered female cat.

My days typically commenced with an hour or so of bird watching and photography when the light was good and at the right angle for the persistent wind direction. I would then call the boat over and swap the camera for the fly rod and work the flats for bonefish for the rest of the day. However, even then it was impossible to ignore the birds. The local guides refer to the Red-footed Boobies as 'rod breakers' as they have a nasty habit of gliding up behind an angler and hovering just above. When the angler lifts the rod to make the next cast, the expensive graphite fly rod usually snaps when it hits the bird! Two surprised anglers actually reported landings on their heads by the Boobies – photos revealed that the culprits were a Red-footed Booby and a Brown Booby. They must have looked taller and more attractive than the low-lying shrubs they usually roost on!

The guides were happy to sit in the boat and do nothing while I observed the birds. Whilst much bird action was around the restricted motus, I observed the restrictions by staying below the high water mark. As the motus were small and low-lying, this provided ample opportunity to observe the colonies without intruding.

This paper focuses upon the Island's seabirds, with waders (Wandering Tattler, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone and Pacific Golden Plover) and land birds (Christmas Island Warbler) recorded on the island being fairly limited. I have followed the nomenclature and taxonomy of the IOC World Bird List, with which the recently released Birds Australia Rarities Committee's Checklist follows. The following provides an account of all of the seabirds encountered on KI, together with comments about my sightings and experiences. A summary is provided in the attached table.

ORDER: PROCELLARIFORMES

Family: Procellariidae

Phoenix Petrel, *Pterodroma alba* (Gmelin 1789), resembles a slightly smaller and darker Tahiti Petrel (both having white bellies), but may be distinguished from it by having a small whitish throat patch and a narrow white leading edge to the sooty-brown underwing. *Pterodroma alba* means white winged racer. It has a slightly more thickset jizz than the Tahiti Petrel. It breeds in burrows or on the ground under vegetation. It feeds on squid, also fish and crustaceans. It has a limited distribution in the central Pacific, where it breeds in the Line, Phoenix, Marquesas and Pitcairn Islands. The largest breeding population occurs on Kiritimati Island, estimated at 2,300 to 3,800 breeding pairs (with the majority occurring on a single motu, Motu Tabu). The total population is estimated at only 10,000 breeding pairs and declining. Major threats are predation by cats and rats at the breeding sites. The IUCN lists this species as Endangered.



Phoenix Petrel *Pterodroma alba*



Phoenix Petrel *Pterodroma alba*

I saw quite a few Phoenix Petrels on KI. They were concentrated around a small number of motus. Pairs would be seen flying in formation around these motus. They were also sighted on nests located on the ground in hollows under vegetation. Whilst many burrows were on the motus, I did not see them enter or emerge from burrows.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *Puffinus pacificus*, (Gmelin 1789), is a medium to large dimorphic shearwater with a fine beak, long pointed tail and holds carpals well forward on the wing. *Puffinus pacificus* means the Puffin of the Pacific, with the reference to Puffin (meaning chubby young nestling) presumably being a reference to their allegedly fine eating qualities. It breeds in burrows. It feeds on fish and squid. It has a wide distribution throughout the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans. Its population is estimated at more than 5 million and declining. The light phase is rare on Kiritimati Island. Its population is estimated at 4,500 to 8,000 breeding pairs, although the counters recognized that there could be many more than this number. Major threats are predation by rats and cats at the breeding sites.

Whilst I saw a large number of burrows on the motus, which were likely to be Wedge-tailed Shearwater burrows, I only saw this species on one occasion. Early one morning, I saw a squadron of about a dozen birds (all dark morphs) making their way across the lagoon from the direction of Motu Tabu (the site of the largest breeding colony) towards the ocean.

Christmas Shearwater, *Puffinus nativitatis*, (Streets 1877), is a small uniformly sooty-brown shearwater with a rounded tail. *Puffinus nativitatis* means the Puffin (see Wedge-tailed Shearwater for meaning of Puffin) of the nativity (a reference to Christmas). It differs from the Wedge-tailed by its smaller size and by holding its wings much straighter in flight. It nests in burrows or under vegetation. They feed on fish and squid. It has a wide distribution through the tropical Pacific. It breeds on a large number of island groups, including the Hawaiian, Line, Phoenix, Marquesas and Easter Islands. Its population is estimated at around 150,000 individuals and stable. Its population on KI is estimated at between 4,000 and 7,000 pairs. Major threats are predation by rats and cats at the breeding sites.

Some authorities list this species as the Christmas Island Shearwater.



Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatis*



Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatis*

I saw groups of this species flying around the motus and roosting on the ground. They were quite happy to sit in much more open areas than the Phoenix Petrel. Whilst I saw no evidence of them nesting on the ground, it was possible that the birds were roosting on the ground as part of or in preparation for breeding activities.

Tropical Shearwater, *Puffinus bailloni*, (Bonaparte 1857), is a small brown and white Shearwater. *Puffinus bailloni* means Baillon's (a French naturalist) Puffin (see Wedge-tailed Shearwater for meaning of Puffin). It nests in burrows. They feed on fish and squid and will pursuit-dive. It has a tropical distribution in the western Indian and western Pacific Oceans. Its population is estimated at around 300,000 individuals and stable. Its population on KI is estimated at more than 3,100 to 4,100 pairs. Major threats are predation by rats and cats at the breeding sites.

This species was recently split from the Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*, whose range is limited to the West Indies, although most older bird guides still retain the old name. The KI subspecies is *P. b. dichrous*, which is limited to central Polynesia and Melanesia in the Pacific. It appears that there might still be future movement in the taxonomy of the Tropical, Audubon's and Little Shearwaters.

I did not sight this species, although some of the burrows found, could have belonged to this species.

Family: Hydrobatidae

Polynesian Storm-Petrel, *Nesofregatta fuliginosa*, (Gmelin 1789), is the largest of the Storm-Petrels, being polymorphic with broad round wings. *Nesofregatta fuliginosa* means small sooty-coloured island bird with a forked tail. All three morphs have brown upper-parts with a short, pale bar across the wing-coverts, a narrow white band across the rump and a forked tail. The more typical pale form has a white throat divided from the white belly by a dark breast band. Intermediates are similar, but with dark flecking on the white underparts. The dark morph has wholly dark underparts. It nests in burrows under vegetation. They feed on crustaceans, squid and small fish, walking on water like other Storm-Petrels. Its range is limited to the central tropical Pacific. It has been recorded as breeding in the Line, Phoenix, Austral, Society, Gambier and Marquesas island groups, although has recently disappeared from Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Kiritimati Island has the largest breeding colony. Its total population is estimated at only 1,500 to 2,400 individuals and in decline. About 500 pairs breed at KI. Major threats are predation by rats and cats at the breeding sites. The IUCN lists this species as Endangered.

A number of authorities record this species as the White-throated Storm-Petrel. Australia has recognized only two sightings of this species, the most recent being off Southport in January 2013.

I saw only a single specimen, feeding in standard Storm-Petrel fashion in the lagoon in quite rough seas and rain squalls. Unfortunately, no photograph was taken.

ORDER: PHAETHONTIFORMES

Family: Phaethontidae

Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*, (Boddaert 1783), is an all-white large Tropicbird with red bill and tail streamers. *Phaethon rubricauda* means red-tailed shiner, with shiner believed to be a reference to the bird's penchant to follow the sun. Immatures have black barring on back, with a blackish bill with yellow base. It nests in a hollow scrape under vegetation. They feed on fish (especially flying fish) and squid, often plunge diving from above. It has a widespread range in the tropical and sub-tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans. The global population is estimated at in excess of 32,000 individuals and stable. The KI population (race *P. r. melanorhynchos*) has been estimated at between 820 to 1,100 pairs. Major threats are poaching and predation by rats and cats.

I sighted quite a few Red-tailed Tropicbirds, travelling high above the lagoon, wheeling over motus and coral spits and nesting under vegetation, including with juveniles.

White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*, (Daudin 1802), is the smallest Tropicbird, white with large black markings on the wings, yellow bill and white streamers. *Phaethon lepturus* means slender-tailed shiner (see Red-tailed Tropicbird for meaning of shiner). The immature is similar to the immature Red-tailed, except yellower bill and black barring morphing into a black patch in the outer primaries. In contrast to the Red-tailed, it nests off the ground in a tree or on a cliff. They feed on fish (especially flying fish) and squid, often plunge diving from the air. It has a wide distribution in the tropical Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Its global population is estimated at more than 50,000 individuals and declining. The KI population (race *P. l. dorotheae*) has been estimated at only 2 to 10 birds. Major threats are predation by rats and cats.

With such an estimated small population on KI, I was not disappointed to miss sighting this species.



Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*.



Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*.

ORDER: SULIFORMES

Family: Fregatidae

Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*, (Gmelin 1789), is the larger of the two species of Frigatebirds sighted on KI. It is distinguished from the Lesser by not having the white spur across the flank and axillaries. *Fregata minor* literally means smaller forked tail bird, which is at odds with the adjective, Great. However, its species name of *minor* originated from Gmelin, who originally described this species as the Lesser Pelican. However, convention dictated that the species name remained when it was placed into a different genus (and ultimately for this species in a different order). It nests in a large nest of sticks in low bushes, usually less than 0.7m above the ground.

They feed on fish (especially flying fish), squid and sometimes the eggs and chicks of other seabirds. It catches prey on the wing from the surface as its feathers are not waterproof and is sometimes observed in kleptoparasitism behaviour. It has a wide distribution in the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans, with a small population in the western Atlantic. The global population is estimated at between 500,000 to 1,000,000 individuals and declining. The population on KI (race *F. m. palmerstoni*) is estimated at between 700 and 900 individuals. Major threats are poaching and predation by cats.



Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. Female on nest.

Some authorities list this species as the Greater Frigatebird.

I saw large numbers of the Great throughout the island at all stages of development, so many that I consider the estimated population to be a significant underestimate. There were also large numbers sighted on nests, with both males and females with juveniles, as well as juveniles alone on the nests.



Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. Immature.

Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*, (Gray 1845), is the smaller and less common of the two species of Frigatebirds sighted on KI. *Fregata ariel* means ariel forked tailed bird, with ariel believed to be a reference to a free spirit in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, referring to its remarkable powers of flight. It is distinguished from the Great by having a white spur across the flanks and axillaries. It nests in a large nest of sticks in low bushes. They feed on fish (especially flying fish), squid and sometimes the eggs and chicks of other seabirds. It catches prey on the wing from the surface as its feathers are not waterproof and is sometimes observed in kleptoparasitism behaviour. It has a similar distribution to the Great Frigatebird. The global population is estimated at more than 200,000 individuals and declining. The population on KI (race *F. a. ariel*) is estimated at just over 100. Major threats are poaching and predation by cats.

I saw no nests of this species, although small numbers were sighted on the wing amongst the Great Frigatebirds.



Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. Adult female.



Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. Adult male.

Family: Sulidae

Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*, (Lesson 1831), is the largest of the Pacific Boobies with an all-white head, black face mask and broader, more extensive trailing edge to the wings. The name Booby, meaning 'foolish fellow,' was applied to this group due to their trusting habits, allowing them to be easily slaughtered by sailors. *Sula* is believed to mean sharp-sighted, which seems apt for this family and genera, and *dactylatra* means black-fingered. It nests on a scrape on low-lying open ground. They feed on fish (especially flying fish) and squid. They plunge-dive and prefer deeper water than other Boobies.

Its distribution extends throughout the tropical Pacific, Indian and western Atlantic Oceans. The global population has been postulated as being more than several hundred thousand individuals and declining. The population on KI (race *S. d. personata*) has been estimated at more than 20 to 30 pairs. Major threats are poaching and predation by cats and pigs. In the longer term, it is vulnerable to heavy rains, sea level rises and storm surges, given its propensity to nest so close to the high water mark.



Masked Booby *Sula dactylactra*, juvenile.

I saw quite a few nesting birds, as well as birds on the wing to/from the nesting areas to the open waters. I saw sufficient birds in the limited areas of the Island I accessed to form the view that the above estimate of the KI population is likely to be significantly understated.



Masked Booby *Sula dactylactra*, adult.

Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*, (Linnaeus 1766), is a small polymorphic Booby with diagnostic red feet and a pink base to the bill. Plumage varies from a mostly white bird through to an all brown bird. It nests in a large nest of sticks in a tree or bush. They feed on flying fish and squid. They plunge-dive and often feed at night on squid. Its distribution extends throughout the tropical oceans. The global population is estimated at more than 1 million individuals and suspected to be in decline. The population on KI (race *S. l. rubripes*) has been estimated at between 2,800 and 4,400 individuals or more, making it the most populous of the Boobies on the Island. The Major threats are poaching and predation by cats.

I saw large numbers of this species, with many nesting at about head high in dense shrubs along the lagoon edge. They are a particularly inquisitive bird, often flying great distances to inspect at close quarters (less than 2m) anglers wading in the shallow waters (and known to stand on unsuspecting anglers' heads – clearly they have not adapted from their predecessors' habits, after which they were named!).



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, juvenile.



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, adult.



Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, adult male.



Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, adult male.

Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*, (Boddart 1783), is the smallest Booby with a brown back, upper wings, head and neck, with a sharp edge along the neck to a white chest, belly and central underwings (the immatures lack the sharp edge). The species name, *leucogaster*, means white stomach. Females have a yellow bill, with males having a distinct blue tinge to the face and base of the bill. It nests on the open ground. They feed on fish (especially flying fish) and squid. They plunge-dive for prey. Its distribution extends throughout the tropical oceans. The global population is estimated at more than 1 million individuals and suspected to be in decline. The population on KI (race *S. l. plotus*) has been estimated at more than 20 and 30 pairs. The major threats are poaching and predation by cats.

I saw only small numbers of Brown Boobies, confirming their status as the least common of the Boobies on KI. I saw no nesting sites of this species.

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

Family: Laridae

Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*, (Linnaeus 1758), is the largest Noddy, being dark brown with a greyish-white forehead, black bill and legs. Noddy is an old English word meaning simpleton. Like the Booby, it is believed that this group of birds inherited that name due to their trusting nature. The genus, *Anous*, also means foolish and, unfortunately for this regal bird, *Anous stolidus* means really stupid bird. It differs from the Black Noddy in its larger size, heavier, deeper and more robust bill, greyer cap and a distinctive two-toned underwing. It nests on the ground or close to the ground in low vegetation. They feed on small fish and squid by dipping. Its distribution is widespread throughout most of the tropical seas. The global population has been estimated at between 180,000 and 1,100,000 individuals. The estimated population on KI (race *A. s. pileatus*) is estimated at between 15,000 to 31,000 pairs. Major threats include predation by rats and cats and poaching of eggs.

This species is also referred to as the Common Noddy.

I saw large numbers of these birds, although only small numbers nesting.

Black Noddy, *Anous minutus*, (Boie 1844), is a medium-sized blackish Noddy with a white cap, black legs and bill. *Anous minutus* simply means smaller stupid bird. It differs from the Brown Noddy in its smaller size, blacker colouring, longer, thinner bill and whiter cap. It nests on a small nest in a tree. They feed mostly on fish, usually closer to shore than the Brown Noddy, by dipping. Its distribution is widespread throughout the tropical Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The global population has been estimated at between 2 and 3 million individuals and stable. The estimated population on KI (race *A. m. minutus*) is estimated at more than 100,000 pairs. Major threats include predation by rats and cats and poaching.

This species is also known as the White-capped Noddy.

I saw large numbers of this species feeding in the lagoon, flying over land and nesting in shrubs.

Blue Noddy, *Procelsterna cerulea*, (Bennett 1840), is the smallest Noddy/Tern. *Procelsterna cerulea* means blue storm-petrel tern. Its small size and blue-grey colouration should prevent it from being confused with other Noddies or Terns. It nests on the open ground in small loose colonies. They feed on marine water striders, crustaceans and fish larvae, usually close to shore by dipping. Its distribution is limited to the central tropical Pacific. The global population is estimated to number between 27,000 and 120,000 individuals and stable. The estimated population on KI (race *P. c. cerulea*) is estimated at more than 570 individuals. Major threats are predation by rats and cats.

There is some disagreement as to the taxonomy of the Blue Noddy and Grey Noddy (Ternlet) (*P. albivitta*), which breeds at Lord Howe and Norfolk (amongst others) Islands, with the IOC splitting them and other authorities regarding them as a single species, Blue Noddy (*P. cerulea*).

I saw large numbers of single birds flying low and slowly over vegetation throughout many parts of the Island. It appeared that they were hawking insects, although I failed to detect them actually taking prey in the air. They were also observed on a motu, which they used for roosting purposes, but I did not observe any nesting behaviour.



Blue Noddy *Procelsterna cerulea*.



Blue Noddy *Procelsterna cerulea*.



White Tern *Gygis alba*, juvenile.



White Tern *Gygis alba*, adult.

White Tern, *Gygis alba*, (Sparman 1786), is the world's only all-white Tern. *Gygis alba* means white mystery bird. The bill is black with a blue base, which is usually only observed at close quarters. It lays a single egg on a bare tree branch with no nesting material. They feed on small fish and squid and forages well offshore. It has a wide distribution in the central and western tropical Pacific, but a more limited distribution in tropical Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The global population is estimated at up to 1.1 million individuals and believed to be

stable. The estimated population on KI (race *G. a. microrhyncha*) is estimated at more than 2,500 individuals. Major threats are predation by rats and cats and poaching. Some authorities recognize this species as the Common White Tern.

I saw several birds at various stages of nesting in trees and shrubs on motus. Larger numbers were sighted flying to and from motus.

Laughing Gull, *Leucophaeus atricilla*, (Linnaeus 1758), is a small dark hooded Gull with dull red bill and legs. *Leucophaeus atricilla* means black-tailed gull. As this species does not have a black tail, there is some conjecture as to whether Linnaeus misapplied *atricilla* in place of *atricapilla*, meaning black-capped. Immatures lack the dark hood. Differs from Franklin's Gull in the dark hood not extending as far down the neck, in its white eye rings not being as conspicuous and in having darker wing tips. It nests on the ground in large colonies. They are opportunist feeders, having the capacity to eat a wide range of food. They will pirate food from other seabirds. Its distribution is limited to the coasts of Central America, extending to the southern parts of North America and the northern parts of South America. The global population is estimated at between 810,000 and 840,000 individuals and has recorded a significant increase in the last 40 years in North America. It is regarded as a rare vagrant at KI (the local fishing guides confirmed that gulls did not visit the Island and were very surprised when I showed them a photo). Whilst recorded in the Hawaiian Islands regularly, it has only rarely been reported from the Line and Phoenix Islands (immatures), although that could reflect few experienced birders have visited these Island groups.



Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*.

Some authorities place this species in the genus, *Larus*.

Having previously read that there were no Gulls on KI, I was very surprised to sight an immature Laughing Gull sitting on top of a low bush in the middle of a Sooty Tern rookery (and appeared to be eyeing off its next feed of one of the many small chicks huddled on the ground).

Greater Crested Tern, *Thalasseus bergii*, (Lichtenstein 1823), is a large greenish/yellow-billed Tern. *Thalasseus bergii* means Bergius' fisherman, after a German collector who collected the type specimen. It has a

shaggy black cap during the breeding season, which receded to white at the front during the non-breeding season. It nests on a shallow scrape on the ground, usually in large colonies. They mostly feed on fish, sometimes squid and crabs, often plunge-diving. It has a wide distribution throughout the tropical parts of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans. It has a global population of up to 1,100,000 individuals and is regarded as stable. The population of KI (race *T. b. cristatus*) is estimated at more than 200 individuals. Major threats are predation by rats and cats.

Some authorities place this species in the genus, *Sterna*. This species is usually known as the Crested Tern in Australia.

I saw a small number of Great Crested Terns flying over the lagoon searching for food and resting in small groups on several sand spits in the lagoon. I did not sight any nesting activity.

Spectacled Tern, *Onychoprion lunatus*, (Peale 1848), is a medium-sized black-capped Tern with a large white forehead extending broadly over the eye, black legs and bill. *Onychoprion lunatus* means crescent-shaped saw with claws, with the saw being a reference to the comb-like lamellae on the upper bills of Prions and presumably the crescent-shaped a reference to the shape of the tail in flight. Upperparts are mostly deep blue-grey with rump and tail paler grey and darker primaries. It nests in a shallow scrape on the ground, usually in dense colonies. They feed on small fish and squid, dipping into the water from the air. Its distribution is limited to the central tropical Pacific. The global population is estimated at 70,000 breeding pairs and suspected to be in decline. The estimated population on KI is between 800 and 900 pairs. Major threats are predation by rats and cats and poaching of eggs.

This species is also known as the Grey-backed Tern and some authors place this species in the genus *Sterna*.

I saw a very small number of this species, flying along the shore in the company of Boobies. I saw no sign of nesting in the areas I frequented.

Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*, (Linnaeus 1766), is a medium-sized, black-capped Tern with a broad but short white forehead, black legs and bill. *Onychoprion fuscatus* means dusky or darkened saw with claws (see Spectacled Tern for meaning of saw). Upperparts are blackish-brown and underparts are white. It is larger than the Bridled Tern, has darker upperparts and the white forehead does not extend past the eye. It nests on a shallow scrape on the open ground in dense colonies. They feed on fish, squid and occasionally crustaceans. They feed mostly by dipping, but occasionally by plunge diving, often foraging at night. Its distribution is widespread throughout all parts of the tropical seas. The global population is estimated at between 21 and 22 million individuals and the trend is uncertain with some populations on the decline and others on the increase. The estimated population on KI (race *O. f. oahuensis*) is likely to be significantly larger than 650,000 pairs, meaning that this is the most populous species on KI. Major threats are predation by rats and cats, poaching of eggs and crushing of nests on roads by cars (yes, several colonies have taken over roads, with no obvious solution but to send several people on foot in front of the car to shoo them away!).

Some authorities place this species in the genus, *Sterna*.

I saw large numbers of this species, including several nesting colonies.

All photographs in the above article taken by Jon Norling.

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Common Name	Scientific Name	IUCN	General Status	Status on KI	Sightings
Phoenix Petrel	<i>Pterodroma alba</i>	Endangered	Tropical central Pacific, rare outside KI	Limited breeder	Many pairs on and around motus, including breeding
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	Least Concern	Widespread in tropical Pacific and Indian	Common breeder	Single group of birds sighted once en route from motu to ocean
Christmas Shearwater	<i>Puffinus nativitatis</i>	Least Concern	Tropical central Pacific	Common breeder	Several groups on and around motus, some roosting but none breeding
Tropical Shearwater	<i>Puffinus bailloni</i>	Least Concern	Tropical western Indian and western Pacific	Common breeder	Not sighted
Polynesian Storm-Petrel	<i>Nesofregatta fuliginosa</i>	Endangered	Rare in central tropical Pacific	Uncommon breeder	Single bird sighted feeding in main lagoon
Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>	Least Concern	Topical and subtropical Pacific and Indian	Common breeder	Reasonable numbers sighted over lagoon and breeding
White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics	Rare Breeder	Not sighted
Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>	Least Concern	Tropical Pacific and Indian	Common breeder	Very large numbers sighted on wing and breeding
Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>	Least Concern	Tropical Pacific and Indian	Rare to Uncommon breeder	Small numbers sighted on wing, none breeding
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	Least Concern	Tropical Pacific, Indian and western Atlantic	Uncommon breeder	Relatively large numbers sighted, including many breeders
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics	Common breeder	Large number sighted, including many breeding locations
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics	Rare breeder	Small numbers sighted, none breeding
Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics and subtropics	Common breeder	Large numbers sighted, but only small numbers breeding
Black Noddy	<i>Anous minutus</i>	Least Concern	Widespread in tropical Pacific and Atlantic	Abundant breeder	Large numbers sighted feeding in lagoon and breeding
Blue Noddy	<i>Procelsterna cerulea</i>	Least Concern	Central tropical Pacific	Fairly common breeder	Some birds sighted on some motus, many sighted hawking low over island
White Tern	<i>Gygis alba</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics	Fairly common breeder	Some birds sighted on some motus, including breeding
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	Least Concern	Coasts of Central America	Rare vagrant	Immature sighted in Sooty Tern breeding colony
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	Least Concern	Widespread in western Pacific & Indian	Common, but few breeding	Small numbers, no nesting colonies
Spectacled Tern	<i>Onychoprian lunatus</i>	Least Concern	Central tropical Pacific	Fairly common breeder	Small numbers, no nesting colonies
Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprian fuscatus</i>	Least Concern	Worldwide in tropics	Most abundant breeder	Large numbers, including nesting colonies

The Tubenoses of the Sub-Antarctic Islands of New Zealand and Australia

(Robert P Morris, 2014)



The author with a Magenta Petrel *Pterodroma magentae* 28/11/2013.

In November and December 2013, I was privileged to embark on an 18 day voyage from Bluff in southern New Zealand as far south as Macquarie Island (Australia) and back to Dunedin in New Zealand via the Chatham Islands. During the trip we visited the following islands / island groups: the Snares, Aucklands, Macquarie, Campbell, Antipodes, Bounty and the Chathams. It is an incredible journey and it is amazing for seabirds – particularly tubenoses, penguins and shags. In addition, a number of amazing endemic species were seen including Sub-Antarctic Snipe, Shore Plover and Snares Fernbird.

This note focuses on the tubenoses recorded on the trip. A second note will be produced in *The Petrel – 2014* on the penguins, shags and other seabirds seen during the trip. This note is a day-by-day summary of the journey and the birds encountered, accompanied by photographs. During the trip we encountered 49 species of tubenose of which I saw 48. The only one I missed was Westland Petrel, seen as we approached the east coast of New Zealand; fortunately I have seen many of those before!

The trip I went on was with Heritage Expeditions on the Spirit of Enderby – a Russian registered boat carrying 50 passengers. And no – we didn't get stuck in ice, that was its sister ship! The trip was focused primarily on bird watching, and the only way to visit these extremely remote locations is on organised expeditions such as this.

Day 1 – Bluff south towards the Snares Islands (15/11/2013)

We left Bluff in the south of the South Island of New Zealand at 4pm and headed south across the Foveaux Strait towards Stewart Island and then turned south-west along the east coast of Stewart Island towards the Snares. The winds were light from the west. Stewart Island and its smaller off shore island have a number of interesting breeding tubenose species including Broad-billed Prions and most of the world's population of Mottled Petrels.

Species recorded: The highlight of this evening's sea-watching included 8 Broad-billed Prions, over 100 Mottled Petrels, 5 Cook's Petrels, 1 Buller's Shearwater, Gibson's (2), Southern Royal (3) White-capped (20+), Salvin's (3). Other species seen included Fairy Prion (4), Cape Petrel (20+), Northern Giant-Petrel, White-chinned Petrel (3), Sooty Shearwater (100s), Common Diving Petrel (100s).



Broad-billed Prion *Pachyptila vittata*



Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*



Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cooki*

Day 2 – The Snares Island (zodiac trip) and south towards Enderby Island (Aucklands) (16/11/2013)

After some initial concerns, due to an increasing 20-25kt south-westerly wind and accompanying swell, we managed an inshore zodiac trip. The Snares Islands support a number of breeding seabirds including Sooty Shearwaters, Cape Petrels (*D.c.australe*), Salvin's and Southern Buller's Albatrosses. All of these were seen in close proximity to the islands, although Buller's Albatrosses were only present in small numbers as most of them return to breed in late December / early January. Following a morning birding from the zodiacs we headed south towards the Auckland Islands. Seabirds were abundant and I spent most of my time watching and photographing Prions which included Broad-billed, Antarctic, Fulmar (I'll come back to these later) and Fairy Prions.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Gibson's (5), Southern Royal (10+), Northern Royal (2), Campbell (5), White-capped (100s), Salvin's (50+), Southern Buller's (5). Northern Giant-Petrel (30+), Cape Petrel (1000s). Prions; Broad-billed (20+), Antarctic (30+), Fairy (100s), Fulmar (20+). Mottled Petrel (30+), White-chinned Petrel (50+), Sooty Shearwater (1000s). Grey-backed (5+) & Black-bellied (100+) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrels (100+).



Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*



White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche (cauta) steadi*



Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*

Day 3 – Enderby Island (17/11/2013)

Dawn broke and I'd got my first good night's sleep as we'd anchored out of the wind next to Enderby Island in the early hours of the morning. We spent the whole day on the island which is an amazing experience. There's lots to see here and the main focus on land is not 'tubenoses'; the first bird of note was a tame New Zealand Falcon sitting in a small tree next to where we'd landed. Whilst a number of tubenoses do breed on Enderby including White-headed Petrels, the main ones I observed were breeding Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses and Northern Giant-Petrels. That evening we left Enderby around 8pm and headed south towards the main Auckland Island allowing little time for sea-watching on the way. Another good night's sleep as we anchored in the sheltered inlet known as Carnley Harbour, which separates Auckland Island from Adam's Island.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Southern Royal (10+), White-capped (1), Light-mantled Sooty (10+). Northern Giant-Petrel (30+).



Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Thalassarche palpebrata*



Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Thalassarche palpebrata*.



Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*.

Day 4 – Auckland Island (am) – then south-west towards Macquarie Island (18/11/2013)

After a fairly fruitless morning on Auckland Island (the contrast with Enderby in terms of resident birds is huge due to pests present on Auckland), we headed south from lunchtime making tracks towards Macquarie Island. Our trip to the White-capped Albatross colony on Auckland was not possible because of light rain and mist which made walking steeply up to the colony both treacherous and more or less impossible. During the afternoon, the weather at sea was good for the southern ocean with a 15-20kt south westerly hitting us on the beam and causing the boat to roll a little in the gathering swell. A number of new species for the trip were recorded including White-headed Petrels, Grey-headed Albatross and Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwaters.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Gibson's (20), Southern Royal (10+), Campbell (5), Grey-headed (1 imm.), White-capped (50+), Light-mantled Sooty (20+). Northern Giant-Petrel (30+), Southern Giant-Petrel, Cape Petrel (100s), Antarctic Prion (100s), Mottled Petrel (8), White-headed Petrel (50+), White-chinned Petrel (30+), Sooty Shearwater (1000s), Short-tailed Shearwater (1), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (c20), Grey-backed (20+) & Black-bellied (30+) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrels (50+).



Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*



White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessoni*



Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophera*.



Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis elegans*.

Day 5 – At sea all day (19/11/2013)

Today we spent the whole day at sea heading towards Macquarie Island. Personally, today was an exciting day as we were getting close to one of our national treasures and en-route, I had the whole day to watch and photograph seabirds in sub-Antarctic waters. However, watching and photographing seabirds became increasingly difficult during the day as the wind increased to 30-40+kts and the swell and waves on top (6-7m), continued to hit the vessel side-on causing the boat to frequently pitch at 35-40°. Spray made photography almost impossible at times. I was fine and watched birds all day; however many people began suffering from seasickness and a number of injuries occurred as people lost balance and fell. We were probably 30-40 people light at dinner due to the conditions. My highlight of the day was 3 Blue Petrels seen as we were nearing Macquarie in the evening; but I was disappointed not to see a Southern Fulmar!

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Gibson's (20+), Wandering (2), Southern Royal (10+), Campbell (5), Black-browed (1), Grey-headed (7), White-capped (50+), Salvin's (2), Light-mantled Sooty (20+), Northern Giant-Petrel (10+), Cape Petrel (100s), Blue Petrel (3), Antarctic Prion (100s), Mottled Petrel (10+), White-headed Petrel (20+), White-chinned Petrel (20+), Sooty Shearwater (100s), Short-tailed Shearwater (2), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (2), Grey-backed (3) & Black-bellied (10+) Storm Petrels.



Cape Petrel *Daption capense*



Grey-backed Storm-Petrel *Garrodia nereis*



Grey-backed Storm-Petrel *Garrodia nereis*.

Day 6 – Macquarie Island all day (20/11/13)

Macquarie Island, whilst is politically part of Tasmania, is approximately half way between mainland Australia and the Antarctic continent, some 1466km south-east of Hobart. Once discovered by man, its penguins and seals (sea lions, Antarctic fur-seals and elephant seals) were plundered by man for oils and meat, until around 1930. These days it is well on the road to recovery with pests (rats, cats and rabbits) almost eliminated and hunting a distant memory. Penguin and seabird numbers are rebounding quickly. It is a World Heritage Site and visiting here is a real once in a life time experience. We spent most of the day on land at penguin colonies but a number of tubenoses were seen during time on the main boat collecting wardens for the base-camp and repositioning the boat in the evening. Macquarie Island has 17 species of breeding seabird and these birds should now flourish in a pest free environment.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Wandering (1), Black-browed (10), Grey-headed (1 adult), Light-mantled Sooty (20+). Northern-giant Petrel (10+), Southern-giant Petrel (15+), Cape Petrel (20+), Blue Petrel (3), Antarctic Prion (50+), Mottled Petrel (5), Soft-plumaged Petrel (15+), Sooty Shearwater (20+).



Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*, adult.



Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*.



Macquarie Island

Day 7 – Macquarie Island (am) then east-north-east towards Campbell Island (21/11/13)

Our second day on Macquarie was spent visiting the Antarctic Research base until lunchtime before departing in a north-easterly direction towards Campbell Island. I was 10 minutes late to the deck at first light and missed a flyby Southern Fulmar! Overnight snow had turned the island from green to dabbled white. After some initial concerns that the 30kt south-westerly could prevent us getting ashore, I was on the first boat towards land. Just after we left, I missed my second and then third Southern Fulmars of the day, which flew past the boat whilst I was onshore! Surely I wasn't going to miss them all together?!

Onshore there were a few tubenoses to watch – I spent most my time looking at penguins although the white phase Southern Giant-petrels were amazing to see. I got the first boat back to the Spirit of Enderb as a Southern Fulmar had been performing around the boat again! But alas I only got views over 1km away – not good enough for a new bird. Luckily, 10 minutes later, my 'duck' was broken and I got great looks at this stunning seabird. Little was I to know that as we sailed away from Macquarie, Southern Fulmars (13) were going to be seen regularly along with a high count of Blue Petrels (60+). This was one of my favourite days of the trip because with bright conditions and a following swell, I could get right to the front of the boat to get some shots of these great birds.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Wandering (1), Gibson's (2), Southern Royal (3), Campbell (10), Black-browed (4), Grey-headed (8), White-capped (6+), Light-mantled Sooty (40+). Northern-giant Petrel (5+), Southern-giant Petrel (10+), Southern Fulmar (13), Cape Petrel (100s), Blue Petrel (60+), Antarctic Prion (100s), Mottled Petrel (10+), White-headed Petrel (2), Soft-plumaged Petrel (10+), Sooty Shearwater (3), Short-tailed Shearwater (20+), Wilson's (4) & Black-bellied (2) Storm Petrels.



Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*



Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*



Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*

Day 8 – At sea all Day (22/11/13)

Another day at sea with conditions and birds very similar to the previous afternoon, still with the large swell and wind behind us from the south-west, we continued on a north-easterly path.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Wandering (1), Gibson's (1), Southern Royal (10+), Campbell (20+), Black-browed (1), Grey-headed (6), White-capped (6+), Light-mantled Sooty (6+). Northern-giant Petrel (2), Southern-giant Petrel (2), Southern Fulmar (3), Cape Petrel (30+), Blue Petrel (3), Antarctic Prion (100s), White-headed Petrel (20), White-chinned-Petrel (2), Sooty Shearwater (3), Short-tailed Shearwater (1), Wilson's (3), Grey-backed (10+) & Black-bellied (20) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (1).



Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregatta tropica*.

Day 9 – All Day on Campbell Island (23/11/13)

This was one of the 'highlight' days of the trip which we all greeted with great anticipation following one and a half days at sea. We put down anchor in the amazing Perseverance Harbour and awoke to green grass covered mountains surrounding us. Campbell Island is another success story in the sub-Antarctic Islands of New Zealand where the removal of pests has assisted endemic species and sub-species to recover from tenuous situations. Access to tubenoses onshore were limited, but I spent most of the afternoon watching displaying Southern Royal Albatrosses which were returning to the breeding grounds in the late afternoon. Light-mantled Sooty, Campbell and Grey-headed Albatrosses all breed on Campbell and were seen in small numbers close to the coast.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Southern Royal (30+), Campbell (20+), Grey-headed (10), Light-mantled Sooty (10+). Northern-giant Petrel (20), Cape Petrel (10+), White-chinned-Petrel (2), Sooty Shearwater (3), Grey-backed (1) & Black-bellied (1) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (2).



Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomopha*.



Campbell Island – looking across Perseverance Harbour,



Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida*

Day 10 – At sea all day towards the Antipodes Islands (24/11/13)

Having left Campbell Island, we continued our course north-eastwards towards the Antipodes Islands picking up our first Antipodean Albatrosses and another surprise Southern Fulmar.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Antipodean (1), Gibson's (1), Southern Royal (25+), Campbell (100+), Black-browed (1), Grey-headed (6), White-capped (10+), Salvin's (10+), Light-mantled Sooty (2). Northern-giant Petrel (2), Southern Fulmar (1), Cape Petrel (50+), Antarctic Prion (100s), Fairy Prion (10), Mottled Petrel (10+), White-headed Petrel (1), White-chinned-Petrel (20), Sooty Shearwater (50+), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (1), Wilson's (1), Grey-backed (4+) and Black-bellied (20+) Storm Petrels.

Day 11 – Antipodes Island (Zodiac Trip am) then north towards the Bounty Islands (25/11/14)

Our day started at sea with the first and only views of Grey Petrels. We then had a lunchtime zodiac trip around the main Antipodes Island – mainly looking for parrots and penguins. We spent a lot of time looking at both Fairy and Fulmar Prions whilst Antipodean Albatrosses were regularly encountered. Following this we headed north towards the Bounty Islands.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Antipodean (20), Gibson's (2), Southern Royal (20+), Campbell (30+), Black-browed (5), Grey-headed (5), White-capped (5+), Salvin's (5+), Light-mantled Sooty (20). Northern-giant Petrel (20), Cape Petrel (100s), Antarctic Prion (20+), Fairy Prion (100s), Fulmar Prion (20+), Mottled Petrel (10+), White-headed Petrel (20+), Soft-plumaged Petrel (15+), Grey Petrel (6), White-chinned-Petrel (20), Sooty Shearwater (30+), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (2), Grey-backed (2) & Black-bellied (20+) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (20).



Antipodean Albatross *Diomedea antipodensis*.



Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*.

Day 12 – Bounty Islands - (Zodiac Trip am) then north towards the Chatham Islands (26/11/13)

We arrived mid-morning in the Bounty Islands surrounded by birds. Salvin's Albatrosses were the dominant albatross with large numbers of Prions, most of which seemed to be Fulmar Prions. Very similar to Fairy Prions, their bluish wash, bill and head shape, flight patterns and cliff / scree nesting activity all pointed towards them being Fulmars. Due to a strong swell, we were unable to get into zodiacs but we still got great looks at all the breeding seabirds. We then started our long journey north towards the Chatham Islands.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Antipodean (5), Southern Royal (20+), Campbell (2), Grey-headed (2), Salvin's (10,000+). Northern-giant Petrel (10+), Cape Petrel (100s), Fairy Prion (20+), Fulmar Prion (100s), Mottled Petrel (20+), Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel (1), White-headed Petrel (2), Soft-plumaged Petrel (100+), White-chinned-Petrel (20), Sooty Shearwater (20+), Short-tailed Shearwater (1), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (20+), Grey-backed (4), White-faced (2) & Black-bellied (10+) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (10+).



Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini*.



Fulmar Prion *Daption crassirostris*



Fulmar Prion *Daption crassirostris*

Day 13 – Day at sea towards the Chatham Islands, arriving at Pyramid Rock at 1pm. Zodiac trip around South-East Island (27/11/13)

This was one of the most exciting days of the trip. The keen birders were on deck from dawn to dusk looking for Magenta and Chatham Island Petrels (without luck!) amongst the various Pterodromas cruising over the south-west Pacific. Even though these two rare petrels were not seen on this day, we did have an amazing day seeing thousands of Chatham Albatrosses during a visit to their breeding colony – Pyramid Rock. In the afternoon, we cruised in the zodiacs around South-East Island before heading for Chatham Island itself.

Species recorded: Albatrosses; Antipodean (2), Southern Royal (5+), Northern Royal (c20), Campbell (2), White-capped (2), Salvin's (30+), Chatham (5000+), Northern Bullers (Pacific) (c200), Northern-giant Petrel (20+), Cape Petrel (100s), Broad-billed Prion (5), Fairy Prion (20+), Mottled Petrel (5+), Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel (5+), White-headed Petrel (2), Soft-plumaged Petrel (10+), White-chinned-Petrel (30+), Sooty Shearwater (100+), Short-tailed Shearwater (1), Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater (15+), Grey-backed (5) & White-faced (30+) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (30+).



Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita*.



Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita*



Pacific Albatross *Thalassarche (bulleri) platei*.



Pacific Albatross *Thalassarche (bulleri) platei*.



Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi*.



Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi*.

Day 14 – All Day on Chatham Island. Evening at sea off the south coast of Chatham Island (28/11/13)

Our visit to the main Chatham Island was eventful as the weather went from bad to worse during the day. Getting back to the vessel on the zodiacs in the evening was quite a task and everyone got very wet. But the day on Chatham was an amazing day. I was privileged to be able to visit the Sweetwater Taiko Reserve where both Chatham Island and Magenta Petrels breed. During the visit I was able to see and handle a non-breeding Magenta Petrel or Taiko – which was a dream come true.

The evening saw us head 5 miles south of the breeding grounds and during the evening we got reasonable views of a Magenta Petrel at sea, followed 30 minutes later by a very close fly-by Chatham Island Petrel! It was an incredible end to an incredible day. We left the Chathams overnight due to 40-50kt easterly winds.

Species seen: Northern Royal (1) & Northern Bullers (Pacific) (4) Albatrosses, Northern-giant Petrel (4), Cape Petrel (3), Fairy Prion (10+), Chatham Island Petrel (1), Magenta Petrel (2), Sooty Shearwater (20+), White-faced Storm- Petrels (30+).

Day 15 – 17 Three Days at sea heading west towards Dunedin (29/11/13 – 1/12/13)

The last 3 days were spent at sea covering a large distance heading west-south-west between the Chathams and Dunedin in fairly rough seas. The highlights of each day were as follows:

- Day 15 – Chatham Albatrosses(3), Black-winged Petrel (1), Gould’s Petrel (1), Buller’s Shearwater (10), Great Shearwater! (1).
- Day 16 – Southern Fulmar! (2), Cook’s Petrel (30+), Flesh-footed, Fluttering and Hutton’s Shearwaters .
- Day 17 – nothing new

Species recorded during these 3 days: Albatrosses; Antipodean (1,3,2), Gibson's (2,6,2), Southern Royal (2,10+,2), Northern Royal (10,10+,5), Campbell (0,2,1), White-capped (5,6,10), Salvin's (30+,30+,5), Chatham (3,0,0), Northern Buller's (Pacific) (20+,0,0), Northern-giant Petrel (20+,4,5), Southern Fulmar (0,2,0), Cape Petrel (50,40,50), Fairy Prion (6,100s,10), Black-winged Petrel (1,0,0), Mottled Petrel (0,7,15+), Cook's Petrel (20+,30+,0), Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel (10,20,5+), Gould's Petrel (1,0,0), Soft-plumaged Petrel (3,10+,0), White-chinned-Petrel (50+,30+,10), Westland Petrel (Not seen by me! - 1,1,0), Buller's Shearwater (10,20+,10), Sooty Shearwater (10,50,20), Short-tailed Shearwater (2,20,5), Fluttering Shearwater (0,3,0), Hutton's Shearwater (20,10,0), Grey-backed (10,5,1), White-faced (20+,2,0) Storm Petrels, Common Diving Petrel (0,3,0).



Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*.



Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*.



Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. Dani Lopez.

Day 18 – Entered the Port at dawn and disembarked around 9am.

We entered the port at dawn passing the Northern Royal Albatross colony on the headland. It was amazing how quickly this epic pelagic had gone and I was back in Brisbane by bed time. It was really nice to sleep in my own bed after 17 nights in a bed which continued to rock and roll all night.

Closing remarks

Firstly – if you ever get the chance to do this trip – just go! You will not regret it!

Secondly, I have to say that I was immensely impressed with Heritage Expeditions. On a number of occasions our schedule and landings could have been thrown off track by the weather. The dedication of the team to meet expectations and ‘make it happen’ was fantastic.

If you’re really keen to see as many seabirds as possible, spend as much time on deck and outside as you can. I met a number of people who missed key birds as they were inside resting or eating for example. On the last night on the Chathams 90% of people missed the Magenta Petrel and all but 4 missed the Chatham Island Petrel.

Sleeping – I hadn’t thought about the difficulties I was going to have sleeping! The continuous movement of the boat in swell along with the long daylight hours meant that quality sleep was hard to come by. I recommend getting to bed as early as possible once it’s dark and finding ways to combat the movement. I took my own pillow and used an eye-blind and ear plugs to assist with isolating noise and light.

Photography – this was tricky. There was always somewhere to take pictures but birds were often distant. In good conditions when the boat was travelling with the wind and swell – the bow of the boat was great. At other times it was necessary to be out of the wind due to spray and rain (or both!). Take good gloves – I used fingerless mittens with a thin pair of gloves underneath. The conditions were really variable and some days were grey and overcast and others bright and sunny.

Weather & Clothing – the weather was fairly variable, although generally not as cold as I’d expected. Be prepared to get cold though as some days I was outside from 5am to 9pm with very little time inside. The wind and rain can get to you after a while. The coldest time was on Macquarie Island where the early morning temperature of 0°C combined with a wind chill of around -15°C made for a bracing start to the day. Take lots of layers and at least 2 sets of waterproofs as things don’t always have long to dry out! Further north the weather was fairly temperate.



Rarities Submissions (with some carried over from previous years)

Species	Submitter	Sighting Date	Case No.	Verdict
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross <i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	P. Walbridge	16/6/2012	BQRAC 174	Accepted
Polynesian Storm-Petrel <i>Nesofregetta fuliginosa</i>	P. Walbridge	19/1/2013	BARC 774	Accepted
White Tern <i>Gygis alba</i>	N. Haass	4/5/2013	BQRAC	Pending
Buller's Albatross <i>Thalassarche bulleri</i>	P. Walbridge	29/6/2013	BQRAC	Submitted
Campbell Albatross <i>Thalassarche impavida</i>	P. Walbridge	29/6/2013	BQRAC	Submitted
Antarctic Prion <i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	N. Haass	29/6/13	BQRAC	Pending
Common Diving Petrel <i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	P. Walbridge	6/7/2013	BQRAC	Submitted
Mottled Petrel <i>Pterodroma inexpectata</i>	N. Haass	20/10/2013	BQRAC	Pending
Mottled Petrel <i>Pterodroma inexpectata</i>	N. Haass	2/11/2013	BQRAC	Pending

Acknowledgements

First of all of course, I would like to thank all the patrons that braved the conditions throughout the year and would hope that they enjoyed themselves enough out in the vast Blue Paddock enough to come out again. Despite what that pie-chart suggests, there is a core of enthusiasts here in SEQ (some, SOSSA members) that have participated in the pelagics for some years. I would also like to thank the continued support of SOSSA, both with the website and the showing of patrons our way, also with technical support when needed. Finally but not least, the continued, tireless support from our skipper, Craig Newton, who takes great effort in making sure our trips go ahead, even when the conditions are less than favourable. His vessel the 'Grinner' is a reliable, well appointed, stable vessel that can move at speed if we need it to.