



Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

Full Name: Nikolas K. Haass, Raja W. Stephenson	Office Use
---	------------

Address: 98 William Street Leichhardt NSW 2040, Australia	Phone No: Home: 2 95726392; mobile: 0424668620 Fax/Email: nhaass@yahoo.com
---	---

Species Name: Westland Petrel	Scientific Name: <i>Procellaria westlandica</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	15/12/2012; 10:58-11:52am
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	54 minutes
First and last date of occurrence:	15/12/2012
Distance to bird:	Down to 3 m

Site Location: Continental shelf break, 39.6 km/21.38 nautical miles east of Wollongong harbour, 34° 21' 28" S; 151° 19' 49" E
--

Habitat: Pelagic, between 100 and 300 fathom line of the continental shelf break.
Sighting conditions: Sea surface temperature: 20.9 to 21.5°C; weather: overcast, clear visibility (see photographs)
Optical aids used: Leica 12x50 BA (NKH); Canon 7D, Canon 400 mm, f5.6 (RWS)

To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site? Westland Petrel has been recorded off NSW. Four of the 8 accepted records are from NSW (BARC website).
--

Did you use a field guide? (or any other references for help with identification). The bird was spontaneously identified in the field without using a field guide. References used subsequently to prepare this report were: ENTICOTT, J. & D. TIPLING (1997): Seabirds of the World. London. • HARRISON, P. (1983): Seabirds, an identification guide. Beckenham • HARRISON, P. (1987): Seabirds of the World. A Photographic Guide. London. • HEATHER, B. & H. ROBERTSON (2005, 2 nd ed.): The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand. • HOWELL, S.N.G. (2006): Identification of "Black Petrels", Genus <i>Procellaria</i> . Birding 38: 52-64. • HOWELL, S.N.G. (2012): Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America: A Photographic Guide. Princeton. • DEL HOYO, J., A. ELLIOTT & J. SARGATAL (1992): Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 1. - Barcelona. • MARCHANT, S. & P.J. HIGGINS (eds) (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks. Melbourne. • ONLEY, D. & P. SCOFIELD (2007): Albatrosses, Petrels & Shearwaters of the World. Princeton. • PIZZEY, G. & F. KNIGHT (2007, 8 th ed.): The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Sydney. • SHIRIHAI, H. (2007, 2 nd ed.): A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife. London. • SIMPSON, K. & N. DAY (2004, 7 th ed.): Birds of Australia. Princeton. Websites: http://www.adarman.com/Birds/Petrels-Shearwaters/Westland-Petrel http://www.adarman.com/Birds/Petrels-Shearwaters/Black-Petrel http://www.adarman.com/Birds/Petrels-Shearwaters/White-chinned-Petrel
--

Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who? Frank Valckenborgh, Darryl McKay, Graham Barwell, Cptn. Carl Loves, Russell Cannings, Jukka Jantunen and other participants. Nobody disagreed with the ID.
--

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

Other details:

The bird approached from the rear and was first seen and photographed in the distance by RWS. NKH instantly confirmed the identification based on jizz and moult stage seen on the photograph. A few seconds later the bird reappeared and was observed by everyone on the boat. It readily approached to boat down to 3 m from the observers and stayed with to boat for almost one hour often accompanied by a Black Petrel, Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Grey-faced Petrels. Unfortunately, attempts to catch the bird failed.

Physical Description of Bird

Summary description:

(1) **Number:** one individual was observed.

(2) **Age, sex:** 2nd year to adult (i.e. non-juvenile, based on feather wear/moult and bill colour); possibly female

(3) **Size and shape:** Large, bulky, stiff-winged petrel - typical *Procellaria* (Fig. 1). Distinctly larger and bulkier than Flesh-footed Shearwater (Fig. 2), Wedge-tailed Shearwater (Fig. 3) and Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel (Fig. 3). Much smaller than – but not dwarfed by – Black-browed Albatross (Fig. 4). Notably larger than Black Petrel (*cf.* Fig. 5), with larger, more square-shaped head, bull neck and thicker, stouter bill (Fig. 6). Feet projecting behind worn tail, less so than in Black Petrel with intact tail (Fig. 7). Note: In the field the size difference was significant, however, it did not appear like a 20% difference. Therefore, we concluded that the bird might be a female.

(4) **Plumage colour and pattern:** Overall blackish brown – including chin; bases to primaries paler. The first conspicuous field mark was the heavy 'secondary moult' of the bird. However, on closer examination (unfortunately we weren't able to catch the bird), we found that not only secondaries, primaries and rectrices were abraded but also the whole underparts of the bird (Fig. 8). This indicates a moult timing that is – within *Procellaria* – unique for Westland Petrel.

(5) **Colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet:** Iris dark; sulcus, culmicorn, naricorn, maxillary and mandibular unguis deep black; latericorn and ramicorn yellowish off-white (Figs. 9 & 10; *cf.* Black Petrel in Fig. 5); the heavy bill appeared straighter and thicker and the nostrils appeared relatively slightly shorter than in Black Petrel (Figs. 10-12); legs and feet blackish (Fig. 13).

(6) **Calls:** No calls were heard.

(7) **Behaviour, movements, flight pattern, feeding, interactions with other birds, comparisons with other species:** Sometimes in close proximity to a Black Petrel, but no direct interactions with Black Petrel and other birds (Flesh-footed, Wedge-tailed, and Short-tailed Shearwaters as well as Great-winged/Grey-faced Petrels were also around). Often perched on water with wings lifted – similar to turkey posture of Giant-petrels (Figs. 9 & 14).

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

Black Petrel: This species was present and provided the opportunity for direct comparison. Black Petrel is smaller, more-or-less the same size as Flesh-footed Shearwater (Fig. 15) or Grey-faced Petrel. Black Petrel has a smaller and more rounded head, a more slender bill. Relative to Flesh-footed Shearwater, the bill of Black Petrel is about the same length but averages deeper (Howell 2006). Black Petrel should show less black on the maxillary unguis than Westland Petrel, which we observed in this case.

White-chinned Petrel: This species is very similar in size and shape. The head of White-chinned Petrel is usually more rounded. Whilst the lack of a white chin does not necessarily rule out a White-chinned Petrel (especially in the South Pacific), this species should show a pale maxillary unguis (often the entire maxillary unguis is whitish, sometimes with dusky tip).

Spectacled Petrel: This species is very similar in size and shape. The head of Spectacled Petrel is usually more rounded. Spectacled Petrel should show less black on the maxillary unguis (but more than White-chinned Petrel) and conspicuous white facial markings. Spectacled Petrel has never been recorded in Australian waters.

Other species seen: Wilson's Storm-Petrel: 1; Black-browed Albatross: approx. 10 (including 1 adult); Campbell Albatross: 2 (2nd year bird birds); **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross:** 1 (2nd year bird – very late!); **Black Petrel:** 2; Wedge-tailed Shearwaters; **Buller's Shearwater:** 1; Flesh-footed Shearwaters (three-digit numbers); Sooty Shearwater: 2; Short-tailed Shearwaters; Hutton's Shearwater: 11; Grey-faced Petrels; Australasian Gannet: 6; Pomarine Jaeger: 8; Arctic Jaeger: 3; Long-tailed Jaeger: 5; Common Tern: 1; Crested Terns; Silver Gulls; Short-beaked Common Dolphin: approx. 12; Inshore Bottlenose Dolphin: 6; Flying Fish: 1



Figure 1: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 2: Westland Petrel with Flesh-footed Shearwater off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Compare size and bulk. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 3: Westland Petrel with Wedge-tailed Shearwater and Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Compare size and bulk. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 4: Westland Petrel with Black-browed Albatross off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 5: Black Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. For comparison. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)

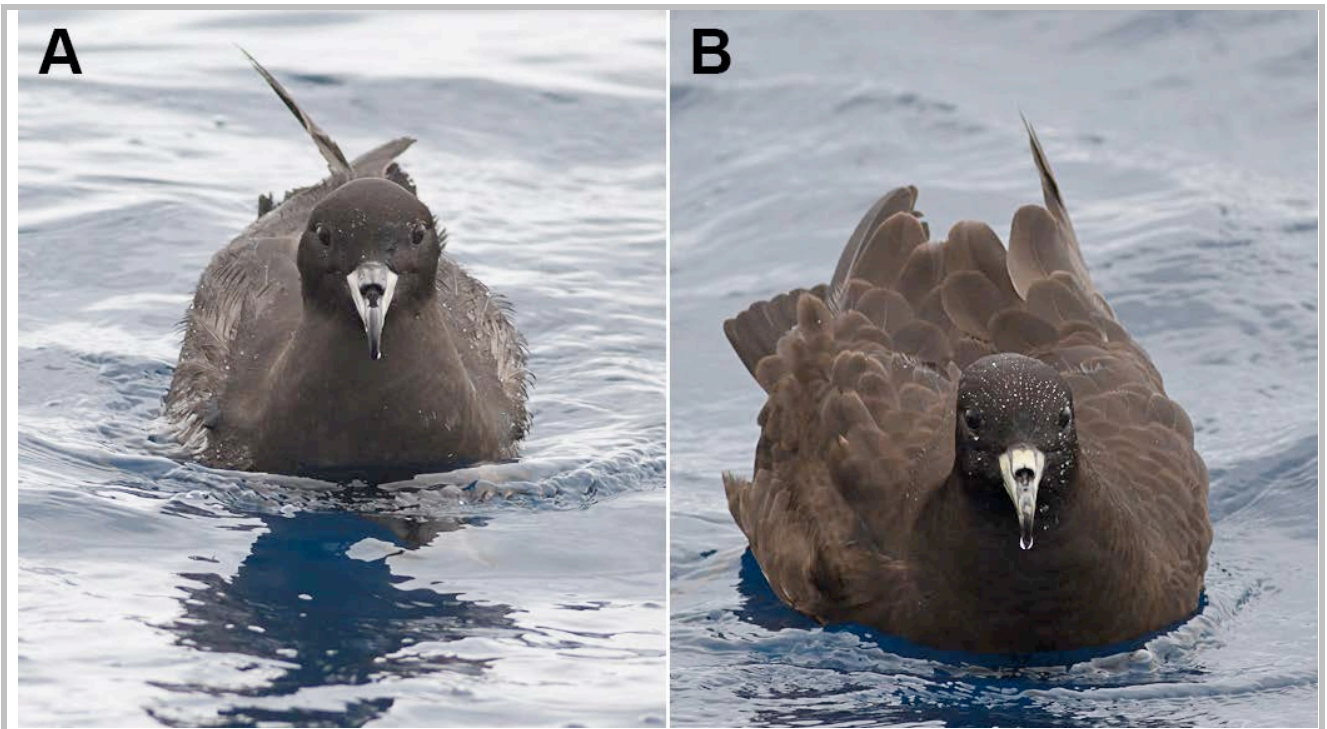


Figure 6: Westland (A) and Black Petrel (B – not to scale) off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Compare head and bill shape. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)

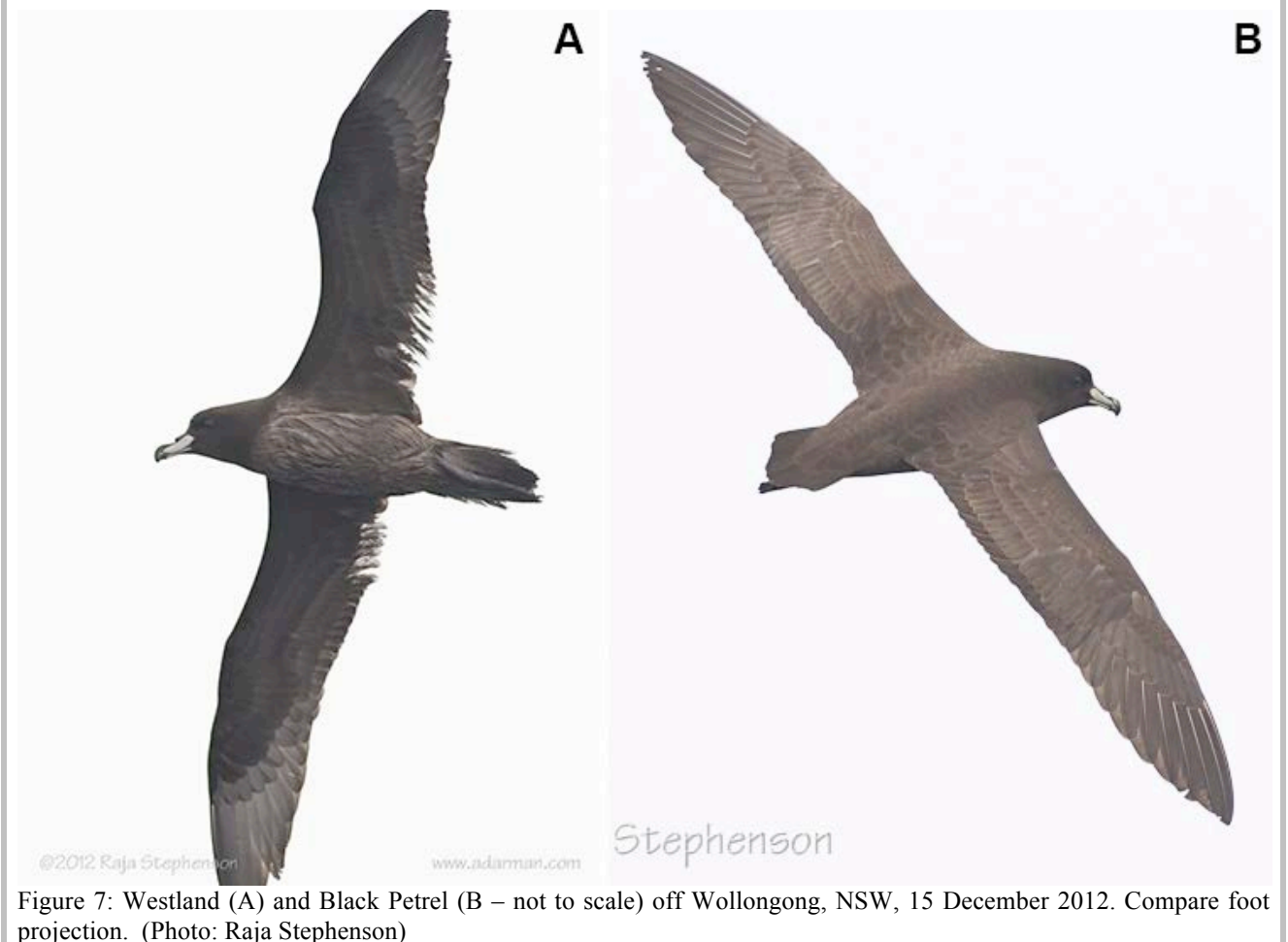


Figure 7: Westland (A) and Black Petrel (B – not to scale) off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Compare foot projection. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 8: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 9: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 10: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 11: Black Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)

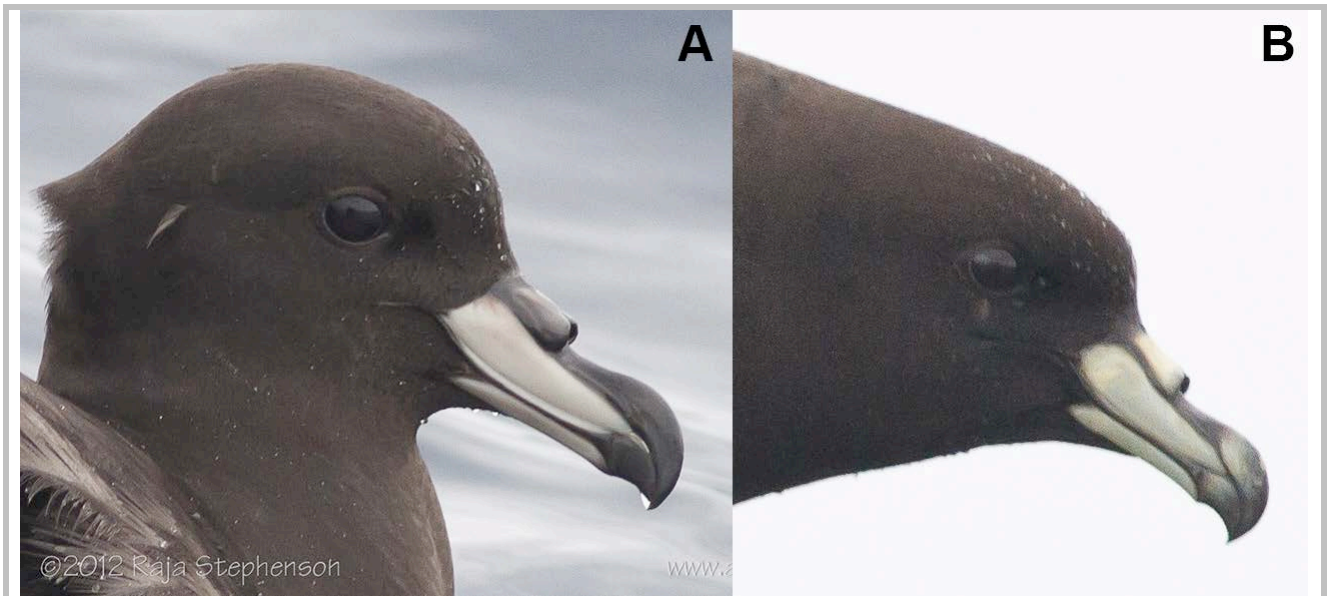


Figure 12: Westland (A) and Black Petrel (B – not to scale) off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Close-ups of Figs. 10 and 11, respectively. Compare bill structure and colour pattern. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 13: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 14: Westland Petrel with Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrels off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012 (Photo: Raja Stephenson)



Figure 15: Flesh-footed Shearwater with Black Petrel off Wollongong, NSW, 15 December 2012. Note similar size. (Photo: Raja Stephenson)

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

during the observation or; shortly after the observation or; from memory; with the aid of the photographs

Please indicate supportive evidence available.

Was the bird: photographed, taped or video taped? If yes to any of these, by whom?

Photos by Raja Stephenson; more photographs of this bird can be seen here:

<http://www.adarman.com/Pelagics/New-South-Wales-Pelagics/2012-December-15-Wollongong>

What experience have you had with the species in question?

NKH has extensive experience with seabirds having been pelagic trip leader on many trips off of New South Wales, Tasmania, California, New Jersey/New York and Delaware/Maryland and having participated on many pelagic trips off North Carolina, Galapagos, Queensland and – especially – **New Zealand**. NKH has been an active member in the Rare Birds Committees of New Jersey (USA), Hessen and Schleswig-Holstein (both Germany).

RWS has extensive experience with seabirds having participated on many trips off New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland, New Jersey/New York, Delaware/Maryland, North Carolina and – especially – **New Zealand**.

NKH & RWS have seen all four *Procellaria* species occurring in Australia, including **many Westland Petrels** off Kaikoura, NZ, in December 2010 (see <http://www.adarman.com/Birds/Petrels-Shearwaters/Westland-Petrel>). In addition, RWS saw a Westland Petrel off Sydney (BARC#598; accepted) and NKH reported an interesting candidate off Wollongong (BARC#560; not accepted).

Signature:

Date: 15/12/2012

Sent by e-mail



Please forward all material to: The Secretary, Birds Australia Rarities Committee, Birds Australia HQ, Riverside Road, East Hawthorn, VIC 3123