



Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

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

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| Full Name: Trip report by Peter J. Milburn Photographs by Peter J. Milburn and Michael C. Double | Office Use |
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| Species Name: Westland Petrel | Scientific Name: <i>Procellaria westlandica</i> |
| Date(s) and time(s) of observation: | 26th February, 2005 |
| How long did you watch the bird(s)? | |
| First and last date of occurrence: | 26th February, 2005 |
| Distance to bird: | |

26th February, 2005 SOSSA PELAGIC TRIP, WOLLONGONG, NSW, AUSTRALIA.

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Report prepared by: P.J. Milburn.

<http://www.sossa-international.org/forum/content.php?247-26th-February-2005-SOSSA-PELAGIC-TRIP-WOLLONGONG-NSW-AUSTRALIA>

Photographs: Flesh-footed shearwater (M. Double), Streaked shearwater (B. Whyllie), Great-winged petrel (P.J. Milburn), **Westland Petrel (P.J. Milburn)**, **Westland Petrel (M. Double)**.

Departed: 07:20 returned at 15:30 EDT .

Sea conditions: to 1.0 to 1.5m SSE.

Swell: to 1.0 to 1.5 SE offshore.

Weather: overcast and humid but with a cool breeze.

Temperature range: 20.1 to 21.1°C.

Barometric pressure: 1012HPa rising.

Wind: SSE 10 to 15 knots.

Sea surface temperature: 23.8 to 25.4°C.

Primary chumming location: S 34° 32' – E 151° 17'.

Summary:

We had been promised a warm day with northeasterly breezes by the weather forecast but a high-pressure system moving east from the Great Australian Bight redefined the weather situation overnight, generating a cool southerly air stream along the New South Wales coast.

It was already blowing at 7 to 10 knots from the south as we left the harbour so with the poor light and lots of boat motion the day seemed to start in a less than ordinary mood. It was quiet immediately outside the harbour with the absence of Silver Gulls being notable. A lone Fluttering Shearwater was the first tubenose

of the day but as we reached Wollongong Reef we found a small group of Flesh-footed Shearwaters that decided to follow us closely. Flesh-footed Shearwaters often appear in large numbers at the end of summer and it appears that this summer is no exception. Soon an assortment of seabirds was following us and, unusually, we were joined by the first Great-winged Petrel of the day in only 40 fathoms. Several small groups of dolphins were also in this area and one group of Short-beaked Common Dolphins rode along with us for a while and, by then, the conditions didn't seem too bad.

The wind blowing against the current flowing along the edge of the continental shelf made the sea very uncomfortable as we headed east over the continental slope but as more Great-winged Petrels appeared so did a Hutton's and then a STREAKED SHEARWATER. After pausing to watch the STREAKED SHEARWATER for a few minutes we turned south into the sea, since the see-saw motion is easier for birding than the rock 'n roll. Shortly after heading south a BLACK PETREL was observed from the upper deck but only fleetingly from the stern.

After heading south for several nautical miles we tried a drift-and-berley session that attracted a large number of birds but nothing out of the ordinary. After half an hour we resumed our cruise to the south along our fish oil slick and had close views of a handsomely plumaged LONG-TAILED JAEGER. The time arrived for us to turn back to port all too soon without any further significant observations.

Sometimes the morale on board sags on the way home but without real justification. This trip was no exception with a BULLER'S SHEARWATER appearing close off our starboard quarter well inside the continental shelf break. On a hunch we decided to stop and berley at some structure that has produced some good rarities in the past, to the disbelief of many and horror of a few. Almost immediately 4 LONG-TAILED JAEGERs appeared and **a black petrel cut a swathe through the hordes of shearwaters as it passed across our stern. As it flew away and settled on the surface the experienced observers with a view to the bow declared that it was a WESTLAND PETREL. Several of us were skeptical, including myself, but our skillful skipper, Captain Carl Loves, maneuvered us close enough to this unconfiding individual to obtain good enough views and photographs that dispelled any doubt that this was indeed the correct identification.** Apologies to those with motion sickness but this turned out to be a lucky turn of events. The bird was in worn plumage but had not yet moulted and, following from our extensive experience with *P. parkinsoni*, this lead us to the diagnosis that this was a bird in its second year at sea.

We managed to pick out one Arctic amongst the Pomarine Jaegers as it harassed 'the Silver Gull' in the mixed flock following us as we approached the harbour.

Highlights:

Under fairly tough conditions, a **BLACK and WESTLAND PETREL** backed up with seven shearwater species including BULLER'S and STREAKED SHEARWATER made this a day to remember. Somebody said 'who cares about the LONG-TAILED JAEGERs' (admittedly while we were pursuing the WESTLAND BLACK PETREL) but they are always a favourite of mine.

Birds recorded according to the latest Environment Australia Reporting Schedule:

Species code: Species name: Numbers:

(Note: numbers in parenthesis = highest count at any one time)

073 Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera gouldi* 55+ (35+)
916 WESTLAND PETREL *Procellaria westlandica* 1 second year
917 BLACK PETREL *P. parkinsoni* 1
853 STREAKED SHEARWATER *Calonectris leucomelas* 1
068 Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia* 36 (31)
917 Hutton's Shearwater *P. huttoni* 3 (2)
069 Wedge-tailed Shearwater *P. pacificus* 750+ (175+)
071 Short-tailed Shearwater *P. tenuirostris* 5 (1)
975 BULLER'S SHEARWATER *P. bulleri* 1
072 Flesh-footed Shearwater *P. carneipes* 275+ (55+)
104 Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator* 11 (5)

106 Australian Pelican *Pelicanus conspicillatus* 3 (2)
945 Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* 38 (15)
128 Arctic Jaeger *S. parasiticus* 1
933 LONG-TAILED JAEGER *S. longicauda* 6 (4)
981 Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* 7 (6)
25 Silver Gull *L. novaehollandiae* 12 (6)
115 Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* 4 (2)

In the harbour:

096 Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* 2 (1)
100 Little Pied Cormorant *P. melanoleucos* 1
097 Little Black Cormorant *P. sulcirostris* 2 (2)
106 Australian Pelican *Pelicanus conspicillatus* 4 (2)

18 species of seabird identified outside the breakwater.

Mammals:

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* 6 (6)



Figure 1: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, 26th February, 2005, Photo: P.J. Milburn



Figure 2: Westland Petrel off Wollongong, 26th February, 2005, Photo: M.C. Double