



NSWO Records Appraisal Committee Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission for a major rarity in New South Wales. (It is not a mandatory requirement) Please complete all sections ensuring that you attach all relevant information including copies of your notes, photographs or other supportive material. (PLEASE USE BLACK INK).

Full Name: Mick Roderick*	Office Use
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Address: 56 Karoola Road LAMBTON NSW 2299 * note –there were 13 other observers on board, all of which I presume saw the bird.	Phone No: 02 4023 0322 / 0421 761237 Fax/Email: mickhhb@yahoo.com.au
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Species Name: White-bellied Storm-petrel (WBSP)	Scientific Name: <i>Fregetta grallaria</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	27/03/2010, at approximately 1100
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	Approximately 3 to 5 minutes as it flew around the boat on 2 “passes”
First and last date of occurrence:	27/03/2010
Distance to bird:	Closest, about 15m

Site Location: At sea off Port Stephens – approximately 32 55 00 / 152 34 47 (which is where we commenced the drift and we would have only drifted about half a mile or so).
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Habitat Open ocean.
Sighting conditions Clear skies. Slight NE breeze, seas and swell 1-1.5m.
Optical aids used: Swarovski 10x42 Binoculars.

To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site? There have been 2 WBSP records off Port Stephens / Newcastle to my knowledge, one in March 2006 and one in Jan 2007. There was a “ <i>Fregetta</i> type SP” seen on the Feb 27 th 2010 pelagic that was considered most likely a WBSP by those who got the best views. This species has also been seen in recent years off Sydney and Wollongong, including a record off Sydney on 13 th March 2010.
Did you use a field guide? (or any other references for help with identification). Yes, Onley and Scofield initially, then double-checked in HANZAB later. All experienced observers were satisfied with the ID on the day.

Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who? (please give names, addresses and phone numbers)?

There were 13 other observers, all of whom I presume saw the bird. No-one disagreed with the ID, especially after photographs were consulted. Of note, some observers have good experience with *Fregatta* SPs, in particular Richard Baxter and Inger van Dyke.

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

100%

Other details: e.g. Do you have historical and or anecdotal information/comments relating to the prior occurrence/status of the species within or near this location? *If more space is needed for any section, please attach with your notes.*

See earlier.

Physical Description of Bird - Please describe only what you saw: (1) No. of individuals present (living or dead); (2) age (adult, juvenile, immature) and sex; (3) size and shape; (4) plumage colour and pattern (including any details of moult); (5) colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet; (6) calls; (7) behaviour, movements, flight pattern, and anything else that might help to identify the bird e.g. feeding, interactions with other birds, describe where the bird was – on ground, in canopy, flying etc. Were comparisons made with other species? *Please also state whether you saw the complete bird or only part of it?* (e.g. upper/lower/front/rear of bird).

Storm-petrel, identification narrowed down to being one of the Genus *Fregatta* (White-bellied or Black-bellied) due to various morphological characteristics. See below for separation from Black-bellied Storm-petrel (BBSP; *F. tropica*)

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

Our bird was identified as a WBSP due to:

- The legs being about the same length of the tail, protruding very slightly, unlike the BBSP, which has legs that usually trail well beyond the tail. I realise that this feature is no longer treated as “completely diagnostic”, but it is certainly still very useful in commencing the separation.
- Completely clean white belly and inner underwing, without any hint of dark smudges that might be expected on a pale BBSP.
- Very straight demarcation of dark head to white belly, which was situated on the upper (not lower) breast. BBSP have a much less even / clean demarcation.
- Pale fringes to inner upperwing coverts, forming a pale ‘wedge’ on inner upperwing.
- Throat was completely black, but admittedly this hardly diagnostic as a pale throat is difficult to see on BBSP.

Furthermore, March would be a very early month for BBSP to be recorded. In my searches through various references (HANZAB etc), pelagic trip reports, Birdline etc, the earliest I could find for NSW was for 14th April 2005 off Swansea. BBSP moving through Tasman Sea waters would be more expected from May onwards. WBSP however, has been recorded off the NSW coast most commonly between January and April (Birdline, SOSSA website, pelagic trip reports).

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

during the observation or; shortly after the observation or; from memory? (combined with photographs)

Please indicate supportive evidence available.

Was the bird: photographed? Yes – images appended to the end of this submission were taken by Heyn de

Kock (heyndekock@bigpond.com)

What experience have you had with the species in question? (Did you know it was a Rare bird when you first saw it?)

Yes.

I saw the WBSP off Newcastle (26/03/06) and saw several on a pelagic run between Newcastle and Norfolk Island in September 2008 (up to 85 birds were recorded during the trip). Other observers on board have had experience with the species also.

Signature: _____

Date: 3rd May 2010







