



Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

Full Name: Dan Mantle, Scott Baker, Plaxy Barratt, Kevin Bartram, Bernie O'Keefe	Office Use
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Address:	Phone No:
	Fax/Email: _____

Species Name: Westland Petrel (Bird 3 of 3 for weekend)	Scientific Name: <i>Procellaria westlandica</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	21 May 2017; 9.43am to 9.51am
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	This individual made several moderately close passes to the boat over a roughly 10 minute period
First and last date of occurrence:	21 May 2017
Distance to bird:	Closest passes were about 30 m

Site Location: Pelagic trip from Eaglehawk Neck.

Habitat: Offshore, pelagic. The bird was seen roughly at shelf edge in 400–700 m water depth (approx. 20 km east of Eaglehawk).
Sighting conditions: Overcast all day, intermittent rain squalls, moderate swell (to 3 m) with prevailing north-easterly winds over last few days.
Optical aids used: Too large a variety of binoculars and cameras (mostly Canon 7Ds and 5Ds with 100-400mm lenses) to list.

Were other observers present? Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification? There were 12 birders on this pelagic and all agree with the identification of these birds. Rob Farnes, Geoff Glare, Neil Macumber, Paul Newman, Peter Lansley, Warwick Remington and Els Wakefield.

To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site? Westland Petrels have been rarely recorded off NSW (8), Queensland (1), Tasmania (5) and Victoria (3). The number of BARC accepted records are shown in brackets. There are also a quite a few unsubmitted records. All previously accepted Tasmania records are from the April–May period (similar to this record), although there is also a notable spread of summer records off NSW too!

Did you use a field guide? Field guides were not used during the pelagic trip. References used help prepare this report were: HOWELL, S.N.G. (2006): Identification of “Black Petrels”, Genus <i>Procellaria</i> . <i>Birding</i> 38: 52-64 MARCHANT, S. & HIGGINS, P.J. (eds) (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks. Melbourne. MENKHORST, P., ROGERS, D., CLARKE, R., DAVIES, J., MARSACK, P. & FRANKLIN, K. (2017): The Australian Bird Guide. CSIRO publishing.

How confident are you of your identification? 100%

Other details:

This is one of three Westland Petrels sightings being submitted for the weekend of the 20th and 21st May 2017. There were two different birds seen each day but only good photos to support the submission of three individuals.

Other birds seen: Total count only given

100	White-capped Albatross
3	Black-browed Albatross (Black-browed)
7	Black-browed Albatross (Campbell)
1	Royal Albatross (Northern)
6	Wandering Albatross (Gibson's)
6	Northern Giant-Petrel
1	Southern Fulmar
20	Cape Petrel
15	Great-winged Petrel
5	Gray-faced Petrel
1	Providence Petrel
7	White-headed Petrel
1	Blue Petrel
50	Fairy Prion
4	White-chinned Petrel
2	Westland Petrel
4	Sooty Shearwater
10	Short-tailed Shearwater
1	Hutton's Shearwater
1	Common Diving-Petrel
25	Wilson's Storm-Petrel
4	Gray-backed Storm-Petrel
2	Australasian Gannet
38	Black-faced Cormorant
1	White-faced Heron
2	White-bellied Sea-Eagle
1	Brown Skua
3	Silver Gull
10	Kelp Gull

Physical Description

Summary description:

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

(2) **Age, sex:** Age uncertain. Sex unknown.

(3) **Size and shape:** a large, long-winged, thick-necked Procellaria with the feet just reaching the tip of the tail. It was clearly much larger than the many Cape Petrels that allowed for close size comparison at all times. Also similar in size to the White-chinned Petrels seen at around the same time.

(4) **Plumage colour and pattern:** All dark plumage, very dark brown to almost black in the poor light. Underside of primaries and greater primary coverts is marginally paler, more reflective.

(5) **Bill shape and structure:** a thick procellarid bill, with a notably broad latericorn, bulbous unguis and the base of the mandibular unguis is approximately in line with the base of the bill (possibly drooping just marginally below this line on this bird).

(6) **Colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet:** The bill was mostly pale yellow with black unguis, black culminicorn and partially dark nostrils. The eyes were dark brown to black. The feet were also black.

(7) **Behaviour, movements, flight pattern, feeding, interactions with other birds, comparisons with other species:** This bird visited the boat for about 10 minutes, making repeated passes over the berley slick.

Note the lack of obvious damage or strong wear to the primaries (thus distinguishing this bird from either of the individuals seen the previous day, Saturday 20th May 2017).

Photos



Photo 1. Westland Petrel (Plaxy Barratt). Note robust bill with all black ungues, angular head and thick neck.



Kevin Bartram

Photo 2. Westland Petrel (Kevin Bartram). Note robust bill with all black ungues, angular head and thick neck.



Photo 3. Westland Petrel (Bernie O'Keefe). Note very thick neck and feet reaching tail tip.



Photo 4. Westland Petrel (Plaxy Barratt). Note feet reaching but not extending beyond tail tip.



Photo crops 1a & 2a. Westland Petrel. Not that the base of the mandibular unguis is roughly in line with the bill base (and not clearly dropping below it as for Black Petrel). Note also the broad latericorn, bulbous maxillary unguis, and very angular head profile.

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

The only real confusion species when seen this well are immature White-chinned Petrel (lacking a white chin) and Black Petrel.

1. The all dark unguis, broad dark edges to the bill plates, very broad latericorn, lack of any noticeable droop of the mandibular unguis below the base of the bill, and dark nostrils all help to eliminate an immature White-chinned Petrel without a white chin.
2. The large size of this bird (similar size to the White-chinned Petrels), thick neck, blocky, angular head, robust bill and feet not extending beyond the tail all help to distinguish this species structurally from Black Petrel. Finer details, such as the mandibular unguis not clearly drooping/extending below the base of the bill, the thick latericorn, and the all dark unguis also help to eliminate Black Petrel.

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? By most on board.

What experience have you had with the species in question?

Kevin Bartram, Scott Baker, Bernie O'Keefe have all seen this species before. Daniel Mantle and Plaxy Barratt have seen a moderate number of Black Petrel off the east of Australia (all on summer pelagics).

Signature: Dan Mantle

Date: 16 July 2018