

BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee

Unusual Record Report Form

Full Name: Norton Gill, Rolf Jensen	Office Use
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Address: PO Box 685, Cairns Qld. 4870 (NG) PO Box 7355, Cairns, Qld. 4870 (RJ)	
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Species Name: Peregrine Falcon (Japanese race)	Scientific Name: <i>Falco peregrinus japonensis</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observations: 25/2/2013, 26/1/2014, 21/10/2014, 12/12/2014, 25/1/2015, 25/11/2015, 18/12/2015, 5/1/2016, 6/4/2016, 18/11/2017, 26/1/2018, 4/2/2018, 7/11/2018 and several other days in Nov-Dec this year so far. Photo and early – late dates predominantly in this list from NG.	All records prior to 2018 by NG, sometimes with other observers from Cairns birders. All believed to be the same adult male (except once, imm. probable female, see NG photo). Not originally realised the bird was a migrant race , until pointed out by observers in S on the basis of earlier photos posted on websites.
How long did you watch the bird(s)? Many observers, at least several hours altogether.	NG a couple hours since 2013. RJ c. an hour during several spells/days since early Nov.2018.
First and last date of occurrence: Most important dates first/last of year, photos, etc. as above.	
Distance to bird: 30-100m roughly, depending on location.	Sitting and flying, photos.

Site Location Cairns CBD, especially a favoured morning perch in window alcove top floor W side of govt. Dept.Natural Resources, Mines, etc. off Hartley St. and Sheridan Street.

Habitat (describe habitat in which the bird was seen): Downtown Cairns CBD, uses several big buildings/structures depending time of day, weather, hunting, etc.
Sighting conditions (weather, visibility, light conditions etc.): Usually pretty good.

To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site? Irregularly in season, adult male believed to be same bird - see above. Disappears to other unknown sites for a day or more at a time, in the visiting overwintering period Nov-April, observed mostly by NG since 2013.

Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who? (please give names, addresses and phone numbers)? Initially some wild guesses, but general consensus now among the most relevantly knowledgeable/experienced local birders. The most important backers of my (RJ) id are 4 experienced local Japanese birders/bird tour guides (one in Japan). Hidetoshi Kudo (“Mikey” to his English-speaking friends) has been the most helpful in providing his photo of a peregrine from southern Japan, and a photocopy page from a Japanese photo field guide book “WILD BIRDS OF JAPAN” by Yama-to-Keikoku Sha Co., 1998

[translation of title by Mikey]. Mikey does not disagree with my (RJ) identification of *japonica*, but points out he has no experience of *calidus* and therefore cannot offer an opinion on that score.

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

99.99% Clincher for me (RJ) was Mikey's Japanese photo guide page and some photos from Japan. There is a faint possibility the bird could be a hybrid from transition zone between *japonensis* and *calidus*, but in my opinion unlikely, the Cairns bird fits well with photos from southern Japan, well south of *calidus* range in the region.

Please confirm that you are willing for BARC to display your images (fully credited with all names) electronically
YES from all relevant photographers

Other details: e.g. Do you have historical and or anecdotal information/comments relating to the prior occurrence/status of the species within Australia?

As detailed in this submission, since 2013. There is mention of *japonensis* in the recently published Australian Bird Guide/Handbook by Menkhurst *et al.* 2017, but apparently no confirmed records for Australia to date.

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/subspecies? Yes.

One adult male (based on head shape and other morphological and plumage characters). Deep yellow cere, legs, orbit. Bird rather small and compact, wingtips reach tail tip (females of resp. races slightly longer tails). Slightly variable light to mid-grey above, rump concolorous w. back, no pale rump as in *tundrius*, white barred blackish below from upper chest, large white throat area as typical of males several races. Looks healthy always, slow moult as expected of N migrant, plumage in v.good condition always. Local food source probably pigeons, will be checked. In one year an immature (juv.plumage 1st year) female(?) was seen and photo'd by NG on same preferred perch building in Cairns CBD. Ad male also seen in same year, tho' 2 birds were not observed together. Only one photo of imm., not ideal angle for sex determination but photo matches photos of imm. *japonensis* and is clearly NOT a locally-bred Australian bird *macropus*, as determined from comparison with an excellent series of male and female fledgling photos by RJ from Townsville nest site.

See photos supplied of Cairns ad. male & imm.

"Please insert extra page(s) for this section"

Please indicate other sub-species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?

See above, *calidus* most likely on range, N.American *tundrius* a faint possibility but ruled out as recently observed and photographed by RJ in Ecuador. I (RJ) am familiar with *calidus* in Africa (migrant from far N Europe there), and can pretty confidently rule it out on the basis of *calidus* lighter colour, more pointed thin moustache streak, larger size, more slender shape, longer tail, (sex for sex) etc.

Was the description written from memory? Yes and no, but with good variety of the Cairns adult photos as reference.

Were photographs taken? (please include where possible)

Yes several from earlier years as well as this year 2018. Selection attached.

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

Not recognised initially by original observers including NG, but subsequently alerted to that from 2017.

RJ has extensive experience of peregrines of several races globally, including nominate *peregrinus*, *calidus*, *tundrius*, *anatum*, *brookei*, *minor*, *macropus*, Barbary Falcon. Three Japanese observers/bird tour guides have commented in favour of the *japonensis* id.

Names: Norton Gill, Rolf Jensen__

Email Address:

captnorty@gillcorp.com.au (NG)

junglej99z@yahoo.com.au (RJ)_

Please email all material



PS Flight shot our bird by Darren Phillips. RJ

Jun Matsui said -

I think it's Japonensis. I'm not familiar with *calidus* though.

Usually breast to underpart has more markings in *japonensis*, but I've seen paler individual like this one before.[The difference he refers to is sex-linked, male vs. female, I think, maybe he's not aware?RJ]

Yu Ota said -[Don't know him - RJ]

No I haven't seen the bird yet. Does it come in summer & leave in winter? The photo looks standard Peregrine in Japan, adult male.

Mikey also consulted w. Japanese colleague in Japan, as below:

I had a message from Mr. Wakasugi. He runs website called マーリン通信 (Merlin communication)

<http://www.tcp-ip.or.jp/~wakasugi/>

First he said that it is very difficult to id subspecies in the field.[I disagree for many ssp - RJ]

We cannot be 100% sure until we capture the bird, he said.

Assuming that Norty's falcon is a typical form of the subspecies, Mr. Wakasugi thinks it is very similar to typical male japonensis.

Calidus usually has narrower moustache. He also thinks my Sendai falcon is most likely japonensis.

The moustache is too wide for typical calidus.

Hope his opinion helps.

I hope this is useful. Supplementary Photos attached incl.2016 imm. female?

Surgery done ok, but recovery still a bit of a struggle, strange allergic reactions.

Best regards - Rolf

On Monday, 24 December 2018, 5:00:24 pm AEST, Tony Palliser <tonyp@bigpond.net.au>





11/11/2018 07:31



AM 7:54 5/JAN/2016