

**ANTARCTIC PETREL *Thalassoica antarctica* beach-cast
on Discovery Bay, Victoria, 5th June 2019.**

Submission to BARC

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THE FIND

On the 5th June 2019 while surveying for seabirds along Discovery Bay, I found a beach-cast Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*, it was intact, but desiccated and in very poor-condition and had most likely been at sea for several days, before being washed ashore. The location was in the eastern section of Discovery Bay (near the Bridgewater Lakes entrance) west of Portland, Victoria.

Weather conditions were fine on the 5th June but in the previous ten days there had been several low-pressure systems moving through with gale force southerly winds along the coast (gusting to 86 km per hour on 26 May).

Antarctic Petrels are normally restricted to Antarctic seas but can wander further north, especially in “wreck” years of Southern Fulmars reaching Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Harrison 1983).

In this case the find also coincided with several Fulmar sightings along the Victorian coast (the author saw four live birds from 1-5 June from around Portland). Then on the 8th June I organized a search of Discovery Bay with Scott Baker and Dan Ashdown we covered 38km of the 52km but no further Antarctic Petrels were found although four beach-cast Southern Fulmars were collected.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification was straightforward, even given the poor condition of the carcass. The tail and primary patterns shown in the photographs were conclusive and eliminated the only other contender Cape Petrel.

- Tail - rump and tail coverts white with blackish terminal band
- Primaries - white inner and brown outer edges to feathers
- Bill - culmen measurement 35 mm.
Serventy (1971) mentions the culmen measurement of 39 (range 36-40), whereas Menkhorst et al. (2017) gave the range as 32-38 mm
- Leg colour was notably pale not black as in Cape Petrels

Dan Ashdown, Scott Baker and Brett Jarrett all viewed the Antarctic Petrel specimen and agreed with the identification.



Fig. 1. Desiccated Antarctic Petrel specimen found on Discovery Bay 5 June 2019.



Fig. 2. Primaries showing distinctive brown and white pattern.



Fig. 3. Bill – Culmen length 35 mm.



Fig. 4. Tail - all white with blackish terminal band – diagnostic.

PREVIOUS MAINLAND RECORDS

HANZAB (1990) mentions nine records and states the first record of Antarctic Petrel was in 1978 (the well documented Fulmar “wreck” year). However, an earlier record of a beach-cast bird has come to light - A. C. (Cliff) Beaglehole is credited with a museum specimen found on Discovery Bay on 23 November 1957 (MV B30284). This record is not mentioned in Beaglehole’s handwritten notes of his 13 years of beach combing (which are in my possession) and perhaps was sent to MV as an unidentified skeleton and identified at a later date.

Other beach-cast records are:

Two on Discovery Bay September 1987 and another near Warrnambool mid-October 1995 (Mitchell 1987, 1995)

The only live record for the mainland is of a bird off Mistral Point NSW on the 26 August 1999 (accepted by BARC).

If accepted this will be the sixth record for Discovery Bay and perhaps the fourteenth beach-cast record for Mainland Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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