

BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission to document a major rare bird in Australia. Its use is NOT mandatory. Please attach and/or include all relevant information including any digital images. Please Email the completed form/submission to the BARC Chair, Tony Palliser tonyp@bigpond.net.au

BARC considers submissions that include a minimum of the submitter's name(s), the bird species claimed and the location and date(s) of the record. However, more information and evidence will usually be required for BARC to accept a record. So, please submit as much detailed information about the bird as possible.

If you choose not to use this form please make sure all relevant information requested in this form is included in your submission. However, it is our preference that you fully complete sections "A" and "B", or follow their headings, so that BARC has some continuity between all submissions.

Section A: Submitter details	
Your name(s) Joint submissions are fine	George Vaughan.
Your email, phone or address	
Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names Include subspecies if relevant	Barau's Petrel, (or, Pterodroma barau).
Site location (with GPS if possible)	Bremer Canyon, Bremer Bay, Western Australia.
Date(s) and time(s) of record (First and last date of occurrence if known)	Third of February, 2020.
How many individuals were there?	One.
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	It basically appeared out of nowhere at some twenty metres from the boat, and then stayed right where it was for a good minute or so of loop the loops!
Habitat description	The open ocean over the mighty gash of the Bremer Canyon, at a depth of between 200 and 1500 metres.
Sighting conditions (e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)	This point in the day was one of the few little overcast, calm patches that came through intermittently; this lasted about five-to-ten minutes. Curiously, despite the wind dying right off, the birds actually started to increase; perhaps they knew something that we didn't at the time, that the Killer Whales were preparing for the hunt??
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	Well... I mean... look at the photos, and read about the behaviour. The moment it flicked around to show us the underside, I knew for a fact that this was it; a Barau's Petrel, probably the most beautiful Cookilaria I have ever had the pleasure of meeting! It was just logical that that's what it was, completely logical, even before reviewing the photos! All it took was the pearl-blue back and that brilliant underwing...
Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?	It was actually my father who spotted it first; I was busily having a chinwag with one of my friends who works on the boat... but it was I who called and confirmed the ID, with all present absolutely agreeing. Funnily enough, the only dissent on the ID came from some fellow on Facebook who'd become fixated on the idea of this bird being a Cook's Petrel... but no one took him seriously, and he recanted his statements, so now no one stands in the way of what are clearly the facts. It saddens

	me how some people seem doomed to constantly play Devil's Advocate, an unhealthy life of perpetual distrust, closing themselves off from that Barnum-esque sense of wonder and joy inspired by the rare and the extraordinary!
What experience have you had with this species?	None in the field, but plenty in my readings on the subject of the birdlife of the Mascarenes, a bit of a hobby of mine, though a lot of my favourite things in that field are on the extinct species, both famous and poorly known...
Has this species been seen at this location before? When?	I was talking about this with the deckhand Billy, a fellow I can vouch for on every level, and he's seen about five in the area all up, all of which were greeted with much fanfare and publicity amongst us birders, and so it's superfluous to go into too much detail about...
Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)	Again, I must respectfully leave it to you, the committee, to track down the Facebook link to the Seabirds and Pelagics group, if that's ok; I haven't yet dipped my toe in the Facebook world, otherwise I'd definitely pop the link in here for you all!
Do you permit BARC to display your images etc. electronically (credited with your name)	Indeed I do! Let's spread the joy of such creatures as far as we can!!

You may choose to delete or ignore this page, but please include as much of the requested information in your submission as possible, especially Sections C and E.

Section C: Supporting evidence

Please include evidence that supports the identification, such as photographs, video, call recordings, etc. Digital images can be pasted into this document below, at the end, or provided separately. Digital video and sound recordings can be sent separately to this form. Label photos etc or insert captions to make note of relevant features they show.

I shall pass on the labels and captions, thank you, because in this case the pictures, and the beauty of the creature in question, speak for themselves...





































Section D: Description of the bird(s)

Please provide a description of the bird(s) including all identification features recorded.
Provide all possible details that might corroborate the identification.

Plumage

This was what first leapt out at me; on the back, the Barau's looks surprisingly similar to the Soft Plumaged, having solidly dark upper wings and a noticeably darker head. However, I could tell something was different; the blue of the back had a beautifully pale, pearlescent quality unlike any other Cookilaria I've ever seen (that is to say, Cook's, Gould's or Mottled), and the dark head was limited only to the crown, giving it the very smart appearance. And then the bird flicked around... that underside!! The Barau's Petrel!! Seeing the white underwing, bordered by the crispest black outline, was one of the greatest pleasures I've ever had in birding! The underwing "tick", as I believe people are calling it these days, was by far the most proportionate and sharp I've ever seen in a Cookilaria; doesn't it bother one when one sees a Cook's and its underwing pattern is so weak? Not to throw shade at that particular bird; it's just that, in plumage, the Barau's takes some beating... especially for that pearly sheen on the back, so

	softly and harmoniously contrasting with the powder-ash wings!
Bare parts	As per usual amongst the Cookilarias, the bill was black.
Moult details	As I've said before in the Tristan Albatross submission, I am too ignorant and quite indifferent about this niche field to say anything of importance; I'll leave it to those more enthusiastic and knowledgeable than I to fill in the gaps for this!
Structure and 'jizz'	All up, it was a lot longer and thinner than any of the other Cookilarias I've seen; there was an almost cigar-like quality to that long, thin chest, and the wings seemed a bit broader.
Calls	As is the norm for Petrels at sea, the Barau's was totally silent.
Behaviours	Now this was the thing I found most charming of all about the Barau's, even more than its unique colours! The thing that made me realise, after a second or two, that this was not the humble Soft Plumaged was the incredible gate and course with which it flew; it flew in very contained, leisurely circles, never straying far from the back of the boat, a course of action it kept up whilst moving backwards in order to leave... and that flight! It was the most beautiful flight I have ever seen of a Petrel!! Looking at it for such a long time, and at such close range, I was astonished at how similar it was to the Great Wing in those intermittent bursts of flapping, far more flapping than any other Cookilaria I know, but, compared to the stiff franticness of the Great Wings wingbeats, the Barau's are just as deep but incredibly soft, lasting for longer spells. Every time its wings beat deeply, it would bounce gently up and down, for all the world like an enormous, leisurely butterfly... I've never seen anything so beautiful, so utterly unique, in all my years in pursuit of the Petrels!! What's more, the fact it actually gave a proper photoshoot, with no sign of unease, was completely unique to its little clade, the Cookilarias; Cook's and Gould's are of course infamous for their wilful natures in regards to the camera, shooting through at long distance (though Gould's is noticeably kinder to the photographer than Cook's; at least they stay in an area, albeit at long range), and Mottled isn't much better, other than its very occasional habit of landing, bobbing about in the slick. Soft Plumaged are almost as bad as Cook's in those long range, fleeting passes. Thus, the Barau's is also of perfect good manners, as well as being beautiful on the eye!!
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	This is another field to which I throw the case open to people more enthusiastic for such minutia than I...

Section E: Confusion species

Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated

Well, it's clearly a Barau's Petrel. I thought so when I saw the underside. I *knew* so when reviewing the photos. I have read about seabirds on an almost daily basis for well over ten years. Thus, all the possible candidates for confusion can be ruled out, perfectly safely, on logic alone.

Section F: References and aids

Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?	As I said in the Tristan submission, the number of sources I've read on all kinds of birds, seabirds and Petrels over my twenty-something years that it would be quite beyond the scope of this submission to list them all here, and they're all relevant in preparing me for this moment.
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Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?	Again, I must acknowledge the importance to this report of all the remarkable people who work for Naturaliste Charters; they are the company that took us out on that unforgettable day. We left the harbour as acquaintances and returned as firm friends, and they challenged me in a respectful, decent fashion to prove my identifications. Love and respect to them all!
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Images cropped to the bird

