

BARC SUBMISSION

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* – offshore Walpole, Western Australia, 12th May, 2019.

Murray Bridges

(prepared by Daniel Mantle & Plaxy Barratt)

Submission note: although still a very rare bird in Australia, there was a notable incursion of the species in January–April 2011 (NSW to South Aus) and there have now been at least six Western Australian records: October 2008, west of the Abrolhos Islands (BARC 587); the Bremer Canyon scored two birds on the 23rd and 24th April 2019 along with singles on the 6th, 7th and 13th January 2020 and a further single on the 4th February 2020; finally this submission of a single bird offshore Walpole, WA, on the 12th May 2019 (this submission).

Circumstances of sighting: a single Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* was photographed (by phone) from a fishing charter off Walpole, 12th May 2019, and posted on the Western Australian Birds facebook page. It is submitted here with Murray Bridges permission.

Description (from photos): A large, slim-winged, dark shearwater with a dark cap, partial white collar, and long, relatively thin, dark bill.

Upperparts: mostly dark brown, including wings, mantle, neck sides and tail. Pale fringes to scapulars and some mantle feathers provide a somewhat scaly appearance.

Underparts: mostly not evident in the photos, but largely white breast sides and flanks still apparent on bird whilst sitting on the water. Some dark feathers on the upper flanks.

Head: a well-defined, dark, brown cap that extends below the eye, a partial white collar, and clean white throat.

Bare parts: relatively long and slender, black bill.

Distinguishing similar species:

This is a very distinctive species and even without good flight photos, we can still quickly exclude any superficially similar species. All other large shearwaters are easily eliminated by the combination of dark cap extending below the eye, long, relatively thin, dark bill, partial white collar, and chocolate brown upperparts and white underparts with sparse dark feathers on the upper flanks.

References:

Howell, S.N.G. (2012). Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America: A Photographic Guide, Princeton, New Jersey.

Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. & Franklin, K. (2017). The Australian Bird Guide, CSIRO, Victoria, Australia.

Onley, D. & Scofield, P. (2007). Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World, Christopher Helm, London.



Figure 1. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* offshore Walpole, Western Australia on the 12th May 2019 (Murray Bridges). Note the dark cap extending below the eye, partial white collar, the long, relatively thin, dark bill, darkish brown upperparts with paler fringes imparting a scaly appearance.



Figure 2. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* offshore Walpole, Western Australia on the 12th May 2019 (Murray Bridges). Note the relatively slender wings, dark cap and partial white collar.