

## BARC SUBMISSION

**Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* – Bremer Canyon (near shelf edge), Western Australia, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.**

**Machi Yoshida**

(prepared by Daniel Mantle & Plaxy Barratt)

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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 eight Western Australian records: October 2008, west of the Abrolhos Islands (BARC 587); the Bremer Canyon scored two birds on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019 along with singles on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> (this submission) and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and a further single on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020; finally there was also a single bird offshore Walpole, WA, on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

Circumstances of sighting: a single Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* was observed and photographed at 3.17 pm by Machi Yoshida during the Naturaliste Charter's Orca tour to the Bremer Canyon, southern coast of Western Australia.

Description (from photo): A large, dark, slim-winged shearwater with a dark cap, white collar (or half collar; photos don't show it on the hind neck), long, relatively thin, dark bill and ill-defined dark belly patch.

Upperparts: dark brown across the back and wings, rump, and uppermost uppertail coverts. The lower uppertail coverts formed a narrow white, crescentic band above the dark, blackish-brown tail.

Underparts: The wings were mostly white with a thick dark trailing edge, a thinner, irregular dark leading edge, dark under-primaries, and some dark feathers in the axillaries, secondary coverts (mostly lesser coverts) and lesser primary coverts. The rest of the underparts were mostly white with a smudgy, dark belly patch. Undertail coverts brown.

Head: a well-defined, dark brown cap accentuated by a white half collar (photos don't show this on the hindneck). Clean white throat.

Bare parts: relatively long and slender, black bill.

Distinguishing similar species: This is a very distinctive species and even these heavily cropped, quite distant photos, quickly eliminate any superficially similar species. All other large shearwaters are easily distinguished by the combination of dark cap, long dark bill, white half-collar, white underwings with dark flecking in armpits and towards the carpal point, the 'dirty' belly patch and white uppertail coverts.

Observer's experience: Machi works aboard the Naturaliste Charters whale watching boats. She is experienced with the usual seabirds of the region, and thus spotting anything that is different. She has a great track record of finding or co-finding rare seabirds in Western Australia, including two very recent Cory's Shearwaters and last year, a Chatham Albatross!!

### 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* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (Machi Yoshida). Note the dark cap, thin white neck collar, long, relatively thin, dark bill, smudgy dark belly patch, dark undertail coverts and darker flecking in the axillaries and secondary coverts.



Figure 2. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (Machi Yoshida). Note the long slender wings, dark upperparts, blackish tail and white lowermost uppertail coverts.