

Submission to Bird Australia Rarities Committee

Species: Rosy Starlings *Pastor roseus*
Location: West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Indian Ocean
Observation Dates: 11 September 2019
Submission number: 1137
Submitted by: Geof Christie, Pam Jones & David James

Circumstances

On 11 September 2019 GC found and photographed a Rosy Starling at the Quarantine Station on West Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. It flushed out of the long grass and landed on the fence along the roadside. It ignored a passing car and dropped down onto the roadside verge and started feeding where it was watched for a while. It was not seen on subsequent visits.

Description and Identification

Refer to the photographs in Figures 1 and 2. The bird was in an adult-type plumage. The bold pink-and-black pattern of the formative and adult plumages is distinctive (e.g. Menkhorst et al. 2017; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Beaman & Madge 1998). It may have had two generations of feathers in the wing and on the head, which would indicate it was moulting either from formative to adult, or from adult to adult plumages. Alternately, it may have been in formative plumage with all feathers of the same (i.e. second) generation, but with the older ones being browner and the newer ones being blacker due to hormonal changes during the moult (c.f. Howell 2010).

Status

BARC has accepted five records of Rosy Starling from Australia: from WA (case 437), NSW (cases 520 and 1077), NT (case 979) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (case 474) in November to December 2005. This would be the sixth record from the CKI. We are concurrently submitting five records from the CKI including this one (Table 2).

Table 2. Records we are now submitting to BARC for Rosy Starling from CKI

Location(s)	Date(s)	Submission No.
West Island town	9 November 2011	1133
West Island airstrip Home Island tip	November to December 2016 24 January 2017	1134
West I Quarantine Station	14 April 2018	1135
West Island town	24 to 26 December 2018	1136
West I Quarantine Station	11 September 2019	1137

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Contributions and Acknowledgments

GC and PJ saw and photographed the birds, and documented them in their monthly bird report newsletters. DJ compiled the submission. Thanks to Ian McAllan for comments on this submission and information about the status of birds on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

References

- Beaman, M. & Madge, S. (1998). *The Handbook of Bird Identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.
- Cramp, S. & Perrins, C.M. (eds) (1994). *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. VIII, Crows to Finches*. Oxford University Press, Oxford UK.
- Howell, S.N.G. (2010). *Peterson Reference Guide to Molt in North American Birds*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York.
- Menkhorst, P. Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. & Franklin, K. (2017). *The Australian Bird Guide*. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.
- Rasmussen, P. & Anderton, J.C. (2005). *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.



Figure 1. Rosy Starling in adult-type plumage at the Quarantine Station on West Island, on 11 September 2019. Note the mixed generations of wing coverts and head feathers. Photo by Geof Christie.



Figure 2. Rosy Starling in adult-type plumage at the Quarantine Station on West Island, on 11 September 2019. Photo by Geof Christie.