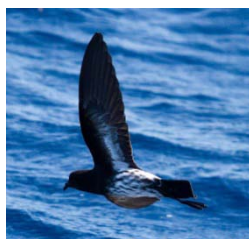


BRISBANE SEABIRD STUDY GROUP
Rare Seabird Forms



(Completed forms to be passed on to BQRAC or BARC, where appropriate).

Name: Paul Walbridge
Address:

Ph: (H) (W) **E-mail:**

Vessel: 46 ft Badenach monohull MV Grinner II
Crew: Craig Newton (skipper)

No. of observers present: 5

Contact(s): full name . Contact details: include address, phone no(s). E-mail, etc.).

- 1). Gus Daly
- 2). Elliot Leach
- 3). Chris Burwell
- 4). Stuart Pickering
- 5).

Date of sighting: 13/3/2021.

Time & duration of sighting: 1000 hrs for approximate 2-3 minutes.

Species name: **Common:** Herald Petrel **Scientific:** *Pterodroma heraldica*

No. of birds observed: 1

Location: Queensland Seamount 27 29.94S/155 05.74.
Be precise & include GPS readings when possible.

Habitat (indicate in appropriate box).

Bay/Inlet	Headland	River Mouth	Ocean Beach	Shelf Waters	Slope Waters	Open Ocean	Other
						*	

Optical and/or other aids used: Canon 1DX MK II + EF 100-400 'L' MK II lens

Prior experience with this species: PW has had considerable experience, with two previous BARC accepted records and banding on Raine Island.

Confidence in sighting? (e.g. 90%, 100% etc.): 100%

Received: **BQRAC Case No:** **BARC Case No:** **Recommendation:**

(Office Use Only).

FORM B

Weather Conditions: (including wind speed & direction).

A high over the Tasman combined with a ridge up the Queensland coast brought NE winds 10-15 knots to the region, increasing during the day. Some light cloud cover with mainly blue skies early, with increasing cloud cover, with good visibility. Air temperature to 25° C, barometer 1021 hPa.

Sea Conditions: (including water temp. °C, when possible).

Seas to 1.5 metres on a 1.5 metre swell with a slight current running to the SE. Sea surface temps. from 26.2° C in deeper water to 27.7° C around the seamount.

General Observations: (include behaviour of bird(s), view, distance etc).

The bird appeared on the port side and made at least a couple of passes before heading off astern of the drifting vessel. Approached just a few metres above the water and generally kept fairly low to the water with maximum elevation to about 15 metres. Showed some interest to the bird activity before carrying on its way north. Closest pass to the vessel around 15 metres.

Description of Bird(s): (be as detailed as possible).

Medium to large Pterodroma, with typical flight for that genus, fairly slim build, compared to the other pterodromas present.

Bare parts: Bill black and not as robust as most other larger pterodromas. Legs and feet not seen.

Head: Dark grey/brown with a white chin and thin white loreal mark.

Upperparts: Neck, back, tail and upperwing uniform grey/brown in colour with no distinguishing markings, although coverts fringed slightly darker, indicating a fresh plumaged bird.

Underparts: Mostly white belly with a broad greyish collar, with mainly white undertail coverts and blackish tail. Underwing, there was a white triangular flash at the base of the primaries, with an associated white crescent in the primary coverts. There was a small whitish wedge in the inner forewing and the secondaries were a paler grey contrasting with the rest of the underwing which was blackish, giving the impression of a blackish bar up through the centre of the underwing. Tail was quite long and tapered.

How was it distinguished from other similar species?:

From the greyer but similarly sized and fresh plumaged grey Providence Petrels present, by less robust build and lacking the white face and much more robust bill of that species, also the upperwing and coverts of Providence Petrel were much more scaly. The vast majority of Providence Petrels also have dark buffish underparts but some can show white underparts due to wear/leucism. The most likely species for confusion is similarly plumaged Kermadec Petrel which can be extremely similar in appearance as shown in photographs in Form C. Similarly plumaged Kermadec Petrels with close scrutiny can be separated by their more robust, front heavy jizz, with a more robust bill, shorter more rounded tail, with usually darker undertail coverts. The main standout feature is usually the pale primary flash in the upperwing of Kermadec Petrel, which is usually obvious but sometimes not so. Also, further study of the upperparts of the Herald Petrel reveal dark fringing to the coverts on the back, whereas a similarly plumaged Kermadec Petrel has pale edging to the same coverts. Intermediate Trindade Petrel is another possibility as birds from Round Island in the southern Indian Ocean have been tracked up the east coast of Australia in recent years and has now been recorded off north western Australia. What complicates matters more is the hybridization between Trindade/Kermadec/Herald Petrels on Round Island. Intermediate Trindade Petrel is a more robust bird than Herald Petrel with a more robust bill and different underwing pattern.

Other Comments:

In the main, Herald Petrel is a fairly distinctive species, likely only confused in this region to similarly plumaged Kermadec Petrels but with good digital photographs, this issue should be solved. As explained in the comparative photographs in Form C this bird looked quite similar to the darker birds encountered on Raine Island in 2018 and described as intermediate plumage in the ABG. The previous two accepted records off Southport were also in March and are probably birds heading toward breeding grounds on Raine Island off far north Queensland, where they start to arrive in late May/early June. The following photographs in Form C clearly show that if only views of the underwing are obtained, in particular just photographs, then more than just plumage has to be taken into account, there are physical differences between Herald Petrel and Kermadec Petrel that need to be looked at, particularly for those not experienced with this group of seabirds.

Bibliography:

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PHOTOGRAPHIC HANDBOOK OF THE SEABIRDS OF THE WORLD – JIM ENDICOTT AND DAVID TIPLING.

The Australian Bird Guide, Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin.

Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World, Derek Onley, Paul Scofield.

THE HERALD PETREL *PTERODROMA ARMZNIJONZANA HERALDICA* BREEDING ON RAINE ISLAND, QLD. EMU 84.

LARGER PETRELS OF THE GENUS *PTERODROMA* BY ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY AND JESSIE M. PENNOYER

Notes on the At-Sea Identification of Some Pacific Gadfly Petrels (Genus: Pterodroma) Author(s): Larry B. Spear, Steve N. G.

Howell, David G. Ainley Source: Colonial Waterbirds, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1992), pp. 202-218

Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm-Petrels of North America, a Photographic Guide, Steve N.G. Howell.

Form C



Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*, Queensland Seamount 13/3/2021. P. Walbridge.



Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*, Raine Island 28/6/2018. P. Walbridge.



Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, Southport 17/4/2021. P. Walbridge.

The top image is of the submitted bird from the Queensland Seamount on 13/3/2021, with the second image of a Herald Petrel from breeding grounds on Raine Island on 28/6/2018 where the author was assisting in a study of the species. Note the upperparts are of the same greyish brown colouration but in particular note the lack of any white showing in the primary shafts or webbing. The third image depicts a Kermadec Petrel from the following month on a regular monthly trip. Kermadec Petrel not only mimics Skuas and Jaegers but appears to mimic other species of pterodroma, either by accident or design, that has yet to be determined, as Kermadec Petrel is known to hybridise with other species on Round Island, in the southern Indian Ocean, with both Herald Petrel but in particular Trindade Petrel.

The Kermadec Petrel on the 17th April Southport pelagic was one of those birds that showed many characteristics of a Herald Petrel, appearing so soon after the Herald Petrel in March and showing why it is so important to be particularly careful in differentiating between the two species. The upperparts depicted in the third image show a bird with almost identical greyish brown colouring of a typical Herald Petrel, although the whitish loreal mark is more typical of Kermadec Petrel. The most standout difference of course is the upperwing flash of the Kermadec Petrel, which can be highly variable, ranging from just whitish shafts as in this particular individual, to birds showing more extensive white in the inner primary webbings.

As can be seen in the third image, there is a good deal of similarity with the upper two Herald Petrel images and from a distance, the pale primary shafts may not appear so evident, and when this bird first appeared it got called as a Herald Petrel until it came close enough to see the upperwing. Good views are needed at times to differentiate between the two species.



Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*, Queensland Seamount 13/3/2021. P. Walbridge.



Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*, Raine Island 28/6/2018. P. Walbridge.



Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*, Raine Island 28/6/2018. P. Walbridge.



Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, Southport 17/4/2021. P. Walbridge.

The top two images show the bird from the Queensland Seamount and one of the darker birds from Raine Island, showing a similar broader necklace, less white in the inner forewing and darker secondaries, making the dark bar up the centre of the underwing less obvious. Image three depicts a bird showing the palest of birds, with a larger area of white in the inner forewing and paler secondaries on the underwing. What the top two images do show is also the longer, tapered tail of Herald Petrel, the third image is of a bird coming in to land so the tail is fanned out.

Image four of the Kermadec Petrel underwing really shows the main similarities between the two species, quite strikingly so, with a quite large area of white in the inner forewing but darker in the secondaries, although still showing a darker area up the centre of the underwing. Closer scrutiny of all the photographs show the Kermadec Petrel to be a more robust bird, with broader wings, a shorter more rounded tail, generally darker undertail coverts but it can be tricky. The above photographs clearly show that if only views of the underwing are obtained, in particular just photographs, then more than just plumage has to be taken into account, there are physical differences between Herald Petrel and Kermadec Petrel that need to be looked at, particularly for those not experienced with this group of seabirds.



Grey-faced Petrel (upper), Herald Petrel (lower) Queensland Seamount, 13/3/2021. G. Daly.

This photo, taken on the day, further illustrates the slender winged, slender bodied jizz of Herald Petrel compared with the more robust *pterodromas*, present on the day, in this case one of the more robust *pterodromas*, Grey-faced Petrel.