

BRISBANE SEABIRD STUDY GROUP
Rare Seabird Forms



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

Name: Paul Walbridge.
Address:

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

No. of observers present: 5

Contact(s): (full name).

- 1). Rob Morris
- 2). Jon Norling
- 3). Brian Russell
- 4). Elliot Leach
- 5).

Date of sighting: 29/3/2020.

Time & duration of sighting: 0752 hrs, 0805 hrs, 1142 hrs & 1550 hrs for a combined 20 minutes.

Species name: **Common:** Band-rumped Storm-Petrel **Scientific:** *Oceanodroma castro*

No. of birds observed: 4

Location: 28 34.76S/155 30.88E, 28 34.71S/155 30.52E, 28 35.41S/155 33.00E & 28 38.89S/155 30.28E. All on the Britannia Sea Mount.

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
						X	

Optical and/or other aids used: Various pairs of high powered Leica & Swarovski binoculars plus Canon and Nikon camera gear.

Prior experience with this species: Rob Morris, various races and along with P.Walbridge & B. Russell previous sighting on the Britannia Sea Mount BARC Case No. 971.

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).

27th – A high over the central Tasman brought initially SE winds to 10-15 knots, increasing by the end of the day to 20-30 knots from the SE. Cloud cover increased as the day progressed and rain periods started to kick in more frequently at days end. Maximum air temp. 26° C, barometer 1020 hPa.

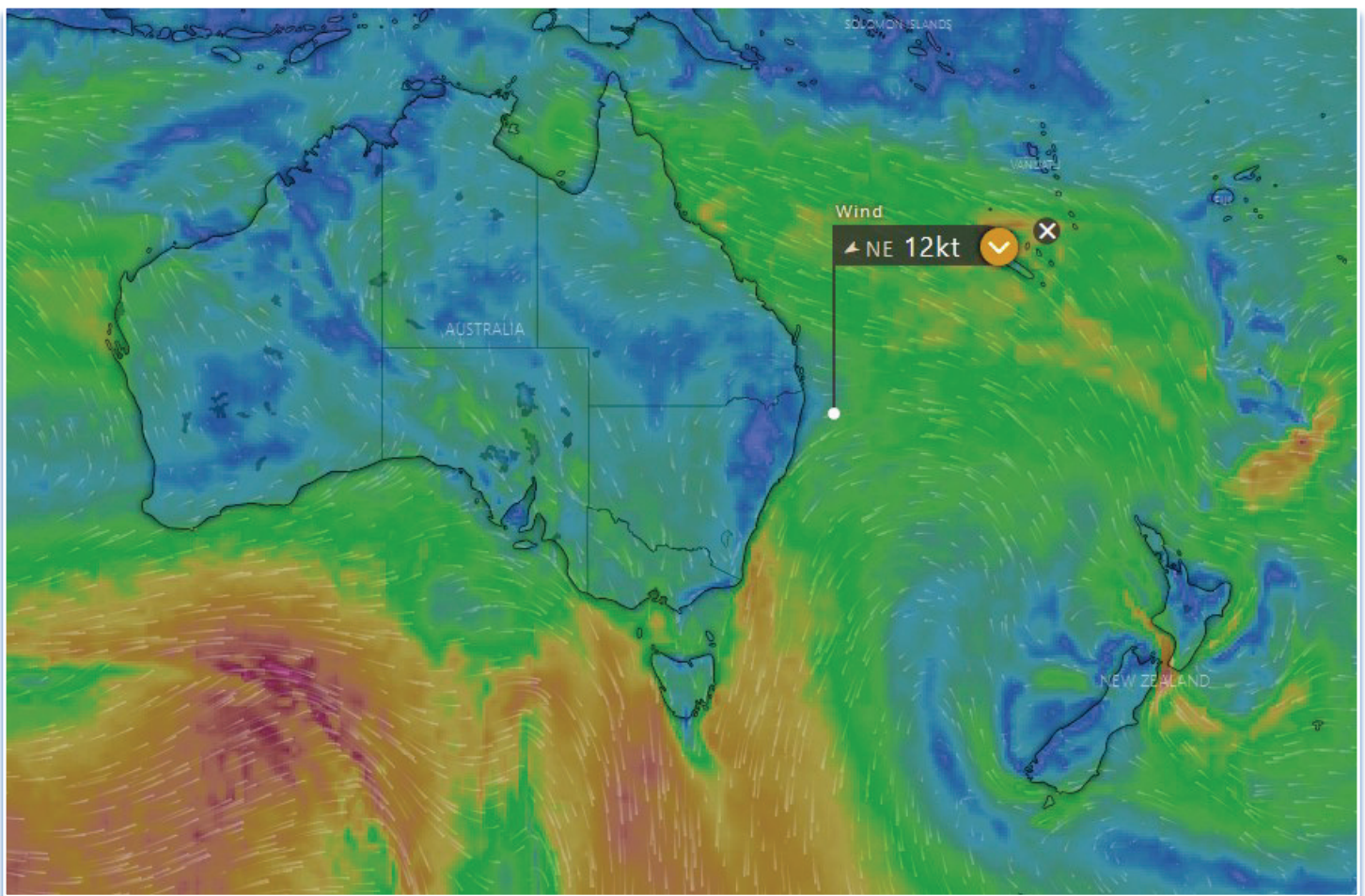
28th – The high over the Tasman persisted with the wind 20-25 knots SE early morning swinging around more to the E 10-15 knots, gusting occasionally to 20+ in front of the frequent heavy rain squalls. Mainly heavy cloud cover throughout the day, with occasional sunny patches, visibility average, maximum air temp. 25° C, barometer 1019 hPa.

29th – Winds had swung around to the NE 12-15 knots rising to 20-25 knots in front of increasing blustery, extensive rain squalls. Heavily overcast with the occasional sunny break min the clouds, visibility generally very average. Maximum air temp. 24° C, barometer 1020 hPa.

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

28th – Very early morning when we left the Southport Seaway and seas progressively worsened as we left the coast with seas to 2 metres on about 2 metre swell easing during the day heading toward the Britannia Sea Mount, with seas to about 1.8 metres on a 1.5 metre swell. Sea surface temperature in slope waters early morning 27° C, dropping across deeper water to 25.2° C, then rising to a max of 27.4° along the sea mount ridge, the highest temps we have recorded out on the sea mounts.

29th – Early on, seas had dropped considerably on a low swell of about 1.5 metres, increasing at times in front of the frequent rain squalls but generally much more favourable than the previous days. Sea surface temps. ranging from 27.2° C to 27.7° C, higher temps than we have seen on the Britannia Sea Mount before.



Weather Chart for 29/3/2020.

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

The vessel was halted above the southernmost peak of the Britannia sea mount in 228 fathoms of water with light rain falling and berley was thrown over. The first CSSPs had appeared but the rain got heavier and it was at least an hour before we could launch. **PW** & **CN** had launched in the inflatable dinghy and were heading away from the vessel when **RM** spotted a largish storm-petrel at 0752 hrs heading left to right at the stern of the vessel and recognized it straight away as a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. There was a mad scramble for the camera gear as the call came over the radio and the bird circled around the front of the still moving dinghy approaching to within five metres and immediately spotted by **PW**, who unfortunately didn't have his camera gear with him. This bird circled a couple of times before heading directly away with a CSSP. Around thirteen minutes later **PW** sighted another one coming from in front of the 'Grinner II' which also passed close to the dinghy, which by now was stationary and attracting birds to the berley. Unfortunately by now there were several large birds eg. Black Petrels, sitting alongside the dinghy and storm-petrels were a bit shy approaching too close, otherwise this bird would most likely have been captured. The next bird was a bit of an enigma as it wasn't

recorded at the time as it wasn't called out but **JN** clearly photographed the bird, according to the metadata in his camera at 1142 hrs, well over an hour after arriving at the second drift and a good 3 ½ hrs after the previous sighting. The final bird was several hours later after we had travelled several miles to get away from a band of heavy rain squalls and was sighted initially approaching the port side of the vessel and started to forage in front of the vessel before it disappeared. This bird wasn't photographed but adequate views were obtained, with in particular the flight pattern noted.

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

PW had the closest views of both the first and second birds as they came within five metres of the dinghy. Impressions were of a medium sized storm-petrel, larger and longer winged than a *Fregetta* but probably a bit less bulky and shorter tailed than Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel. Although appearing long-winged the hand appeared quite broad, which probably leads to its distinctive flight style. When flying direct, low over the surface it had a flicking style of flight and to the observer, not unlike a small plover such as a Black-fronted Dotterel. When attaining more elevation however such as the second bird did, it can appear more 'cookilaria' like. Of course, they also at times showed a sudden change of direction, with the flight style more typical storm-petrel like.

Bare parts: Bill, black, fairly long, droopy and heavy looking for a storm-petrel. Legs and feet, blackish with very short tarsi, in flight not projecting beyond the tail.

Head, neck and throat, dark sooty brown.

Upperparts: Back and lower back dark sooty coloured, rump and uppertail coverts, white with a blackish tail, with the white rump extending only partially down the sides. The upperwing equally dark sooty coloured, with blackish primaries, there was a pale silvery to buff covert bar from the secondary coverts across the greater coverts, not meeting the leading edge of the wing.

Underparts: Dark brown, slightly paler than the head and upperparts, with a broad dark bar into the undertail coverts, combined with white side panels, tail blackish. Underwing coverts and secondaries, brownish grey and slightly reflective, primaries blackish. All the birds observed appeared to be in fresh plumage with no obvious moult noticed.

How was it distinguished from other similar species?:

The closest species in size and plumage to Band-rumped is Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, which has been recorded in the region (BARC case No. 947, Southport, 28/6/2015 – Accepted). Leach's Storm-Petrel has a more angular wing configuration with a more erratic flight. More often than not but dependant on condition of plumage Leach's has a black line of feathering down the centre of the rump but this can be apparent in other species, although not as obvious. The pale covert bar on Leach's Storm-Petrel looks more defined due to being paler greyish and also reaches the leading edge of the forewing, unlike Band-rumped. Whereas Band-rumped Storm-Petrels from the North Pacific have an apparent slightly concave tail when open, Leach's has an obvious forked tail. Also, the white rump of Leach's Storm-Petrel is more extensive and triangular shaped. Wilson's Storm-Petrel although superficially similar to Band-rumped is a good deal smaller with shorter more narrow wings, with the white on the rump extending down further into the undertail and flanks. Wilson's Storm-Petrel also has obvious foot projection beyond the retrices in flight and yellow webbing to the feet.

Other Comments:

Of recent years there have been several accepted records of the North Pacific breeding Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulweria*, occurring increasingly further south than previously recorded, including a few off southern Queensland/northern New South Wales, all the way down to the Sydney region. After the first Australian record Of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel on the Britannia Seamount 9/3/2016 and now these birds on our first March trip to the local northern Tasmantid seamounts since then, occurrence of this species could become more regular. However, the exact origin of these birds will remain a mystery unless one can be captured and DNA taken. The group led by **PW** have clearance to capture the majority of the storm-petrel species we encounter in the region, so capture remains a possibility. There have been a few sightings of Band-rumped Storm-Petrels on WPO cruises to the NE of the region in recent years. The Australian Bird Guide, published in 2017 mentions Band-rumped Storm-Petrel as a possible candidate to occur in Australian waters and this has been borne out.

Bibliography:

SEABIRDS an identification guide by Peter Harrison 1985.

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

Band-rumped Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* on the Britannia Seamount: First Record for Australia. Rohan H. Clarke, Paul Walbridge *et al.* BARC Case No. 971.

Petrels, Albatrosses & Storm-Petrels of North America, A Photographic Guide, Steve N. G. Howell.

Photos of North Pacific Band-rumped and Leach's Storm-Petrels provided by Kirk Zufelt.

Occurrence and identification of the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) complex off North Carolina. S. Howell *et al.*

What is known about the enigmatic Gulf of Guinea Band-rumped Storm Petrels *Hydrobates cf. castro*? By Robert L. Flood, Ricardo F. de Lima, Martim Melo, Philippe Verbelen & William H. Wagstaff

Form C



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 29/3/2020- 0822 hrs. R. Morris.



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 29/3/2020-1142 hrs. J. Norling.



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 29/3/2020-1142 hrs. J. Norling.



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 29/3/2020-1142 hrs. J. Norling.



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 29/3/2020-1142 hrs. J. Norling.



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* 5/11/2017. Galapagos. K. Zufelt.



Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* 6/11/2017, Galapagos. K. Zufelt.

Photos taken in the Galapagos in November 2017 by Kirk Zufelt. Note the heavier bill of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, compared to the longer, more slender bill of Leach's Storm-Petrel. Also the longer, more forked tail of the Leach's Storm-Petrel with a more triangular, more extensive white rump, compared to the straighter edged less extensive white rump of the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. The covert bar on the Leach's Storm-Petrel reaches the leading edge of the wing, whereas it falls short on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.