

BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee

Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission to document a major rare bird in Australia. Its use is NOT mandatory. Please attach and/or include all relevant information including any digital images. Please Email the completed form/submission to the BARC Chair, Tony Palliser tonyp@bigpond.net.au

BARC considers submissions that include a minimum of the submitter's name(s), the bird species claimed and the location and date(s) of the record. However, more information and evidence will usually be required for BARC to accept a record. So, please submit as much detailed information about the bird as possible.

If you choose not to use this form please make sure all relevant information requested in this form is included in your submission. However, it is our preference that you fully complete sections "A" and "B", or follow their headings, so that BARC has some continuity between all submissions.

Section A: Submitter details	
Your name(s) Joint submissions are fine	Andrew Jensen (AJ) and Stuart Pickering (SP)
Your email, phone or address	

Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names Include subspecies if relevant	South Island Pied Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus finschi</i>), hereafter 'SIPO'
Site location (with GPS if possible)	Bradbury's Beach, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island (QLD) approx -27.493892, 153.402410
Date(s) and time(s) of record (First and last date of occurrence if known)	First sighting - 29 May 2021 @ 12:50 (AJ); 30 May 2021 @ 11:30 (SP) Seen by multiple observers thereon, until last reported sighting on 13 July 2021 as per eBird (last photographed and confirmed 4 July 2021). However, it does appear to have been first seen on 8 March 2021 as a post on Birds and Birding SE Queensland 2021 Facebook page has a shot claiming to be from that date, added retrospectively to the Facebook page in response to AJ and SP's sighting being posted on the weekend of 29-30 May
How many individuals were there?	One
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	Approximately 150m (AJ), down to 30m (SP)
Habitat description	Sandy beach adjacent to intertidal mudflats on the western side of North Stradbroke Island, adjoining Moreton Bay
Sighting conditions (e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)	AJ - partly cloudy, hazy sunshine, moderate southerly breeze SP - mild, partial cloud, light southeasterly wind
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	100% - at original time of initial sighting on 29 May 2021, view was extremely brief (see sighting notes below in Section C) and prospect of an Australian Pied Oystercatcher (hereafter 'OZPO'), particularly a northern Australian bird, was a pitfall I was wary of based on some previous claims of SIPO in Australia being this form. But subsequent follow up sightings and images obtained by multiple observers leave no doubt

<p>Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?</p>	<p>Yes - AJ found the bird initially on 29 May 2021 and SP verified the sighting the following day and obtained better views including that of diagnostic upperwing pattern. Subsequent to this seen by multiple observers (see eBird, Australian Twitchers and South East Queensland Birders Facebook pages) - no dissenting voices to identification</p>
<p>What experience have you had with this species?</p>	<p>AJ - one vagrant bird seen (14 May 2011) at Point Halloran, Brisbane SP - one vagrant bird seen (14 May 2011) at Point Halloran, Brisbane, plus many birds seen over 4 visits to New Zealand between 2003 and 2012 Both familiar with OZPO</p>
<p>Has this species been seen at this location before? When?</p>	<p>Not that I am aware of - from a cursory glance there are no eBird or BARC accepted records from this site, although individuals have been seen at multiple sites across Moreton Bay (Brisbane and surrounds) in the past - Manly Marina, Clontarf (twice) and Victoria Point Interestingly, it appears to be the same bird that was seen at Woy Woy (NSW) on 28 October 2020 by Neil Broekhuizen and Andrew Walker (BARC case number 1174) based on the seemingly identical damage to the right leg, as noticed by Gus Daly</p>
<p>Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)</p>	<p>Yes - discussion took place on both Australian Twitchers and South East Queensland Birders Facebook pages and multiple images attached: https://www.facebook.com/groups/718576241555767/permalink/3997926410287384/ https://www.facebook.com/groups/1438587753095451/permalink/2914089968878548/ Images of the bird are on eBird at the Bradbury's Beach hotspot: https://ebird.org/hotspot/L4650339 Images of the bird while at Woy Woy: https://ebird.org/checklist/S75512315</p>
<p>Do you permit BARC to display your images etc. electronically (credited with your name)</p>	<p>Yes</p>

You may choose to delete or ignore this page, but please include as much of the requested information in your submission as possible, especially Sections C and E.

Section C: Supporting evidence

Please include evidence that supports the identification, such as photographs, video, call recordings, etc. Digital images can be pasted into this document below, at the end, or provided separately. Digital video and sound recordings can be sent separately to this form. Label photos etc or insert captions to make note of relevant features they show.

AJ originally recorded the bird from distance on 29 May 2021 while waiting to catch Straddy Flyer ferry back to mainland after a seawatch at Point Lookout on North Stradbroke Island. AJ caught a view of a short legged, long billed Oystercatcher from the ferry terminal, but the view was blocked within seconds by the docking ferry. The bird was seen to be missing its right foot, but regardless did seem short legged compared to a nearby OZPO that was similarly afflicted. The bill was long, not deep based, and it appeared to have extensive white going up the back

The bird did not show its wing pattern (upper or under) in the brief viewing time. AJ had to catch that ferry so could not stay to get longer views, and the camera battery died instantly, limiting to just three shots. AJ put news out on Facebook as a possible SIPO, although was reasonably confident privately about this identification. Spoke with SP that afternoon about the bird to relay sighting and series of events

SP visited the next day and obtained good views, including that of the upperwing pattern which confirmed it to be a SIPO. SP obtained closer images, and flight shots of the bird, including good comparison shots with OZPO

Digital images pasted on pages below - higher res images available if required

AJ images from initial sighting on 29 May 2021



This image shows extensive white appearing to go up the back on the subject bird (the bird sighting down facing right)



Bill appears long and thin in this image, without a deep broad base



Although just getting up, legs do seem short in this image. Bill is long and thin, small size compared to surrounding OZPO noticeable in this image

SP images from sighting on 30 May 2021



In flight, the distinctive broader and longer wingbar across the secondaries is obvious, reaching the white of the rump. A wedge of white going up the back is just visible. Compare with the OZPO which have a much reduced wingbar and a more squared off less extensive wedge of white going up the back



The short legged stature is obvious in this image, compared to surrounding OZPO, even with the missing foot. The bill shape - long, thin and slightly upturned is apparent



As above image

Steve Murray images from sighting on 31 May 2021 (reproduced with permission)



This shot shows the short left leg, particularly the tibia, well, as well as the bill shape and structure, including the more tapered tip than OZPO. Also visible is the more extensive white bar on the secondaries, even on the folded wing



Good comparison of structure and bare parts versus OZPO - the shorter legs and longer, thinner, slightly upturned bill apparent



The flight shot shows the SIPO as the leading bird - the broader white wingbar obvious, as well as the smaller size. The shape and length of the bill also shows well in this image

Michael Daley images from sighting on 1 June 2021 (reproduced with permission)



This image shows the bill structure well - long and thin, slightly upturned



The underwing can be seen in this shot, being extensively white



The different bill structure and leg length from OZPO can be seen in this shot

Section D: Description of the bird(s)

Please provide a description of the bird(s) including all identification features recorded. Provide all possible details that might corroborate the identification.

Plumage	Essentially the same as OZPO, aside from the key differences outlined in Section E below. Head, neck, upper breast and upperparts black, white underparts
Bare parts	Bright orange-red bill, with a slightly paler almost yellowish tip. Red iris, with orangy orbital ring. Legs pale pink
Moult details	Moult not observed
Structure and 'jizz'	Dumpy structure as a result of the shorter legs, and accentuated by the missing right foot and part of tarsus. Longer billed than surrounding OZPO. Smaller in stature and bulk than OZPO - although there was at least one OZPO in the flock with a missing foot also (and subsequent observers reported a few missing feet) the smaller stature and longer billed jizz was still an obvious distinction
Calls	Not heard to call during observation period
Behaviours	<p>AJ: during brief observation, the bird was settled on the beach adjacent to OZPO, allowing direct comparison. No interaction was observed. The bird was predominantly sitting on the sand, although stood briefly as the flock shuffled as the ferry arrived, which allowed observation of the leg length to be made (initial observation and interest in the bird when sitting down was based on bill length and stature)</p> <p>SP: On the 30th the bird was observed for over 2 hours with the OZPO flock and seemed very settled. It was very reluctant to fly and was one of the last birds to leave when flushed twice by fisherman. Observed feeding on the evening of the 30th, would slowly walk along and tap the mud with its good foot before probing in typical Oystercatcher fashion</p> <p>In subsequent sightings and images online, the bird appeared to be being bullied at times by OZPO, and seemed to be struggling to walk with missing foot</p>
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	<p>Without direct comparison with other SIPO, attempt at sexing the bird was not made. Noted that female birds have longer bills</p> <p>Based on lack of brown fringing on upperparts, and reasonably intense leg colouration, aged as an adult, and based on the Woy Woy connection, obviously at least 6 months old. Given the age these birds can live to it tempting to speculate this bird may have been in Australia and moving around for a while, as per the famous "1N" individual which has been recorded in Victoria, at multiple sites in New South Wales and at Clontarf in Queensland</p>

Section E: Confusion species

Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated

Main confusion species was OZPO, and both AJ and SP aware of the pitfalls of northern Australian birds in particular which show more extensive white in the back and wing

For example, one bird at Surfside, NSW found by Demetris Bertzletos (27-28 February 2016) which was discussed extensively on Australian Twitchers on Facebook showed an extensively white underwing, with a more prominent upperwing white bar. However, this wingbar did not reach the rump as in SIPO, and the bird had structural features more consistent with OZPO, namely long legs and a stouter, shorter bill, more consistent in shape with OZPO and lacking the slightly upturned, more tapering profile of SIPO. This bird was discussed here in detail:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/718576241555767/permalink/965825060164216/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/718576241555767/permalink/965253076888081/>

OZPO, be it a northern bird or a local bird, was ruled out as follows:

- Shorter legs than OZPO, particularly in the tibia. The tibia were so short that in a number of images the leg is barely visible above the knee. As noted above, this bird was missing its right foot and part of the tarsus, compromising its gait significantly, but regardless of this the shorter legs than OZPO are visible in the images provided in Section C

- Longer bill than OZPO with variation in shape from that species. As well as being longer, the bill was finer in proportion than in OZPO, and less deep based. This resulted in a bill shape unlike the heavy chisel shape of OZPO. Instead, based on the longer and finer proportions, as well as a slight upturn, the bill had a more delicate appearance
- The white wingbar reached the trailing edge of the secondaries, being broader than in OZPO. The wingbar was also longer, and extended to meet the white of the rump unlike in OZPO. The differences are well shown in images in Section C from SP and Steve Murray. Although some northern OZPO can show this feature, other morphological differences described above exclude this form of OZPO. It is worth noting this feature was also visible on the closed wing, with a noticeable white patch on the base of the folded wing unlike OZPO (see Steve Murray's image above in Section C)
- Underwing did appear whiter than surrounding OZPO, although perhaps not as extensive as memory from the Point Halloran SIPO in Brisbane in 2011. However, Michael Daley's open-wing image in Section C show an extensive white underwing, particularly the underwing coverts. Underside of primaries black, and a black bar across the leading edge of the underside of the primary coverts. A quick check of images of SIPO from New Zealand seems to show a fair bit of variation in underwing, albeit all generally whiter than OZPO, like this bird
- White from rump extended further up back in more of a wedge shape than the less extensive squared off rump of OZPO. Although some northern OZPO can show this feature, other morphological differences described above exclude this form of OZPO
- Reduced bulk than OZPO (perhaps 20%) but hard to judge given posture and structural differences

I am aware that other characteristics such as a less extensive black foreneck and differences in the orbital ring/iris colouration, have been mooted as features of SIPO but these were not noticeably different on this bird. However, in some shots the white "tab" on the side of the breast seems a little more extensive although this could just be posture related

Additionally, Variable Oystercatcher (*H.unicolor*) pied morph ruled out by size - the bird in question was small in stature compared to surrounding OZPO - assume Variable Oystercatcher would look larger, and additionally would have a stouter, heavier bill

Section F: References and aids

<p>Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?</p>	<p>Australian Bird Guide (2019) (Menkhorst, Rogers, Clarke, Davies, Marsack and Franklin)</p> <p>Additionally, previous observations of SIPO on Australian Twitchers Facebook page were referenced, including observations which turned out to be OZPO (as referenced above)</p>
<p>Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?</p>	<p>Gus Daly and Elliot Leach were consulted at the time of sighting on 30 May by AJ and agreed it was a strong candidate based on initial images</p>