

**ANTARCTIC PETREL *Thalassoica antarctica* at Bridgewater Lakes, Portland, Victoria,  
16 May 2021**

***Submission to BARC***

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## **Summary**

On the 16 May 2021, Patrick and Mary Ward (PMW) Field Naturalist's found and photographed a storm driven Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica* at Bridgewater Lakes. This record if accepted will constitute the second live record for Mainland Australia.

PMW photographed the Antarctic Petrel with a mobile phone while it was swimming a few metres off the boardwalk beside the boat ramp Fig 2. At one stage it swam under the boardwalk and a short time later swam back into the open where it was harassed by a raven and was last seen swimming into a narrow reed lined channel (P. & M. Ward pers. comm). This channel connects to the main section of the middle lake.

The author received a photograph of the bird that night and informed the Ward's of the identification and significance of their discovery. The following day starting at daylight I carried out a thorough search of the area but there was no sign of the bird. Subsequent searches over the next few days at the lakes and adjacent Discovery Bay also failed to find any trace of the bird. Brett Jarrett and I carried out a final search on the 22 May. A kayak was used to paddle around the edges of the lake concentrating on the reedbeds but there was no sign of the Antarctic Petrel, however a badly decomposed carcass of a Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides* was recovered from a feeding platform in the reeds.

The weather leading up to the discovery was extremely inclement with several low pressure systems moving through and gusting gale force winds over several days see Fig 4 Bureau of Meteorology Chart and Fig 5 Portland Weather Map.

On the 18 May I passed the photograph of the Antarctic Petrel on to Scott Baker who uploaded it to the Australian Twitchers Facebook Page.

## **Introduction**

Antarctic Petrels are normally restricted to Antarctic seas where they are abundant but can wander further north, especially in "wreck" years of Southern Fulmars reaching Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Harrison 1983). In Australia they are considered a vagrant with the first records in 1978, the well documented "wreck" year with five beach-cast individuals in Victoria and one in Tasmania and South Australia (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

The first record of a live bird for the Australian Mainland was off Mistral Point, Sydney on 4 August 1999 (BARC case 277). A second record of a living bird was from remote Australian waters 180 nm NW Macquarie Island on 4 November 2011 (BARC case 727).

There are at least 14 beach-cast records including six from Discovery Bay. The most recent on the 5 June 2019 (BARC case 1076). It was found by the author on Discovery Bay 1.3 km from the Bridgewater Lakes bird.

## Identification

Identification from the photograph was straight forward.

The distinctive clear-cut brown and white plumage to the upperparts being diagnostic.

- brown head and upperparts
- secondaries white and outer primaries brown

The only other species in contention being Cape Petrel *Daption capense* which would show a black head and black and white chequered pattern on the upper parts.



**Fig. 1: Antarctic Petrel** photo by P. & M. Ward.



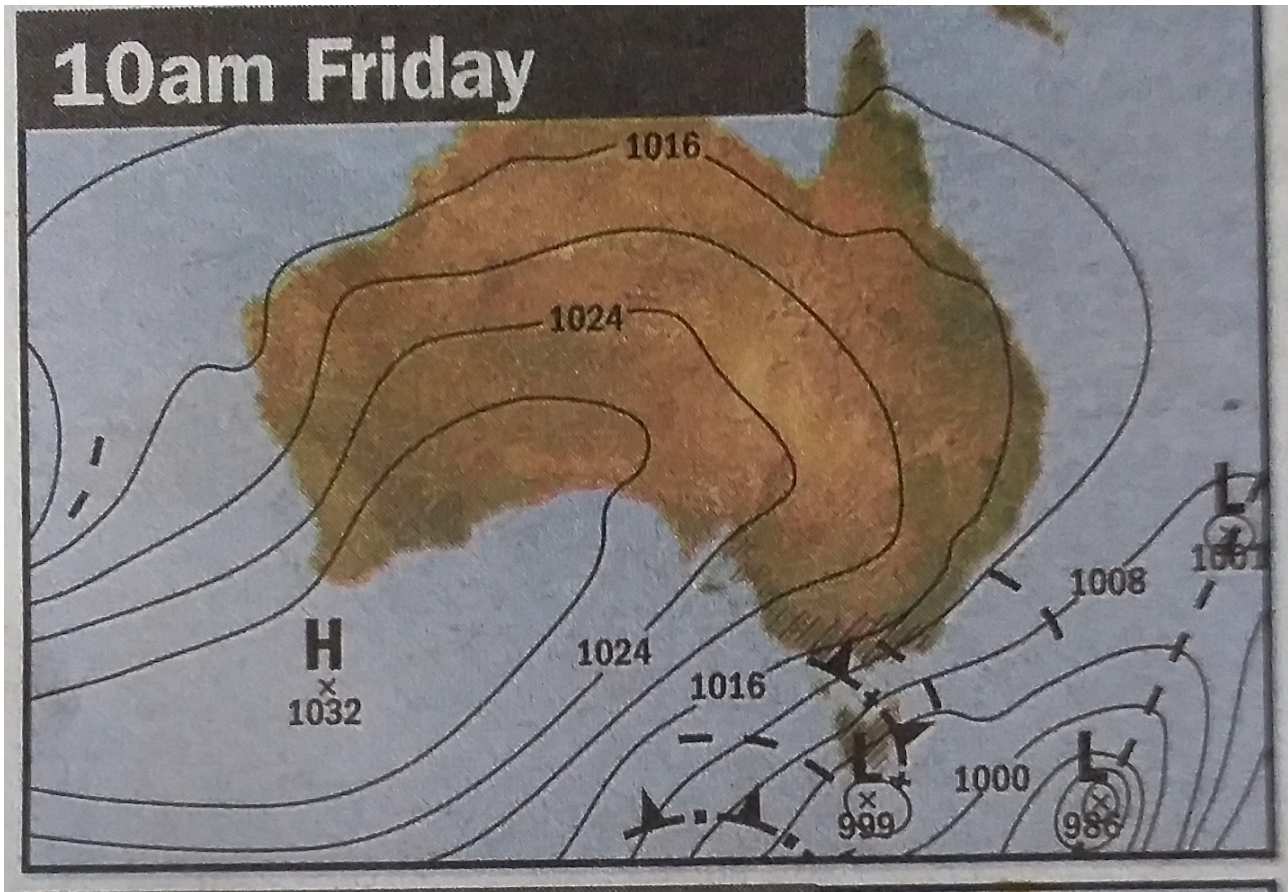
**Fig. 2:** The boat ramp section of the lake showing the boardwalk from where the Antarctic Petrel was photographed . The channel to the right was where the bird was seen last and connects to the main section of the lake. photo Robert Farnes



**Fig. 3:** Bridgewater Lakes showing the small inlet in the centre of photograph where the Antarctic Petrel was found. Background shows the close proximity to the eastern corner of Discovery Bay. photo Robert Farnes

**Fig. 4: Weather Observation taken from Cape Nelson 1-16 May 2021 (modified chart)**  
Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

Date	Day	Temps		Max wind gust			9 am			3 pm				
		Min	Max	Dir	Spd	Time	Temp	Dir	Spd	MSLP	Temp	Dir	Spd	MSLP
		°C	°C		km/h	local	°C		km/h	hPa	°C		km/h	hPa
1	Sa	14.4	22.0	N	46	11:01	17.7	N	28	1022.5	21.8	NNE	22	1020.4
2	Su	17.2	20.8	N	44	06:27	17.4	NW	20	1019.1	18.2	WNW	19	1018.1
3	Mo	13.3	14.8	SSE	65	22:22	13.4	S	31	1021.0	13.6	S	33	1020.9
4	Tu	9.5	15.2	S	59	00:46	12.9	SSE	33	1025.7	13.7	SSE	22	1025.4
5	We	12.3	15.9	E	41	18:41	15.1	ENE	17	1026.8	13.9	E	15	1024.8
6	Th	11.6	16.3	ENE	50	08:52	11.9	ENE	35	1020.8	15.2	W	19	1017.6
7	Fr	11.7	20.2	NNW	44	07:29	16.1	NW	24	1012.7	18.7	WNW	20	1010.5
8	Sa	13.6	16.5	W	46	10:28	15.4	WNW	19	1012.8	15.3	W	22	1013.9
9	Su	9.3	17.4	WNW	63	18:09	12.0	NW	20	1017.0	16.3	WNW	31	1013.3
10	Mo	11.9	16.9	S	94	14:19	12.0	NNW	26	1004.6	11.5	SSE	61	1008.9
11	Tu	10.2	13.5	SE	61	08:18	11.4	SE	31	1024.4	12.9	SE	30	1025.1
12	We	10.4	15.1	ENE	48	07:23	13.2	ENE	30	1024.8	14.2	NE	13	1019.8
13	Th	8.5	13.5	NW	74	08:52	12.2	NNW	35	1009.7	12.1	WSW	48	1012.6
14	Fr	11.0	13.5	WSW	106	21:50	12.2	W	24	1015.0	12.8	WSW	31	1014.8
15	Sa	8.8	13.5	SSE	74	05:24	11.3	S	39	1021.7	12.1	NNW	15	1022.7
16	Su	9.9	14.4	WSW	72	13:27	12.9	W	37	1021.1	13.6	WSW	39	1019.9



**Fig. 5: Weather Map** published in the **Portland Observer** 14 May 2021

### Acknowledgements

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