

## BARC SUBMISSION

### Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* – Bremer Canyon, Western Australia, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.

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(BARC submission prepared on observer's behalf by Daniel Mantle & Plaxy Barratt;

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Submission note: although still a rare bird in Australia, there was a notable Australian incursion of the species in January–April 2011 (NSW to South Aus) and there have now been at least eleven Western Australian records: October 2008, west of the Abrolhos Islands (BARC 587); the Bremer Canyon scored two birds on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019 along with singles on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (this submission), the 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020, and 8<sup>th</sup> January 2022; finally there was also a single bird offshore Walpole, WA, on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Circumstances of sighting: a single Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* was observed and photographed on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 by William Betts during the Naturaliste Charter's Orca tour to the Bremer Canyon, southern coast of Western Australia.

Description (from photo): A large, dark, slim-winged shearwater with a dark cap, partial white collar, long, thin, dark bill and smudgy dark, lower belly patch.

Upperparts: mid-brown across the back and wings, rump, and uppermost uppertail coverts. The pale edges to most of the upperpart feathers gives a distinct 'scaly appearance'. The lower uppertail coverts formed a narrow white, crescentic band above the dark brown tail.

Underparts: The underwings were mostly white with a dark trailing edge and under primaries, and distinctive dark spotting in the axillaries, and secondary coverts. The rest of the underparts were mostly white along with a very distinctive smudgy dark belly patch. Undertail coverts brown.

Head: a well-defined, dark, brown cap extending below the eye, and accentuated by a partial white collar (that fades to mid brown on the central nape). Clean white throat.

Bare parts: relatively long and slender, black bill. Feet only apparent underwater in one image; colour not obvious.

Distinguishing similar species: This is a very distinctive species and this excellent set of photos quickly eliminates any superficially similar species. All other large shearwaters are easily distinguished by the combination of dark cap, long dark bill, partial white collar, white underwings with dark flecking in axillaries and secondary coverts, the dark brown, lower belly patch and the white crescent across the lower uppertail coverts.

Observer's experience: Bill and Darryl are experienced birders who have been on many Australian pelagics. They are thus very familiar with the typical seabirds of the Bremer region and identified this bird straight away. They also found a Cory's Shearwater on this same trip!! Bill had previously seen Great Shearwater off Eaglehawk, Tasmania on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Machi works aboard the Naturaliste Charters whale watching boats. She is experienced with the usual seabirds of the region, and thus spotting anything that is different. She has a great track record of finding or co-finding rare seabirds at the Bremer Canyon, including a Great Shearwaters at this location just a few weeks prior (7 Jan 2020).

#### References:

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Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. & Franklin, K. (2017). The Australian Bird Guide, CSIRO, Victoria, Australia.

Onley, D. & Scofield, P. (2007). Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World, Christopher Helm, London.



Figure 1. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (William Betts). Note the dark cap, partial white collar (fading to dull brown on mid nape), long, relatively thin, dark bill, white lowermost uppertail coverts and overall scaly appearance to the dark upperparts.



Figure 2. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (William Betts). The dark cap extending below the eye is particularly prominent on the images of the bird sitting on the water.



Figure 3. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (William Betts).



Figure 4. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (William Betts).



Figure 5. Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* at the Bremer Canyon, Western Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (William Betts). Note the dark spotting on the underwing secondary coverts and axillaries, and the dark belly patch is just visible too.