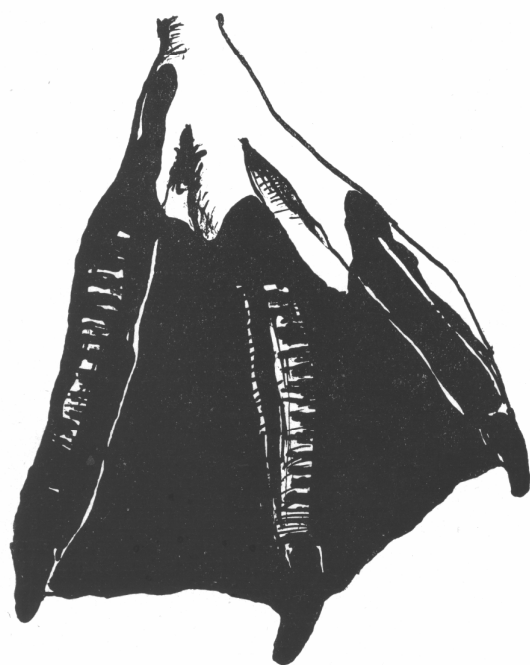


Head of *Pterodroma hypoleuca*, Heron Island, January 8, 1962.
Photo by A. J. Reid.



Foot of *Pterodroma hypoleuca*, sketched
from projected transparency.

An Australian Record of *Pterodroma hypoleuca*

By ALAN J. REID

The burrows of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *Puffinus pacificus*, riddle the paths about the tourist cabins on Heron Island, some 70 miles off the Queensland east coast off Gladstone. On the night of January 7, 1962, my friend Julian Lavarack told me of two 'baby mutton-birds' he had seen at the entrance to one of these burrows. The presence of two shearwater chicks seemed unusual and, as my wife insisted on seeing baby mutton-birds, we asked Julian next morning to lead us to the nest site.

Still sheltering at the burrow entrance were two small petrels quite unknown to me. They were extremely docile and easily handled, so much so that my wife threw one up in the air to see if it could fly. It immediately flew strongly out to sea. Fortunately photographs were taken of the head, wings and feet of the remaining bird; also measurements of the culmen, 24 mm; dertrum, 18 mm; wing, 232 mm; and mid-toe, 40 mm. No plumage description was made but it was recorded that the legs and feet were pink with black tips. This bird, when released, also flew directly out to sea.

The developed colour transparencies were poor, and in February 1962 Mr A. R. McEvey, National Museum of Victoria, confirmed my tentative identification of White-winged Petrel, *Pterodroma leucoptera*, from the slides, apparently overlooking the foot colour. We had supposed the birds, at this time, to be stragglers from the Cabbage Tree Island (N.S.W.) population of *leucoptera*.

Here the matter rested until April 1963, when Mr Roy Wheeler in conversation expressed surprise at such a northerly record of the Gould Petrel and, that if it was so, it would probably be a second record for Queensland. In correspondence later that month he suggested contacting Mr Pat Bourke, who was familiar with the species and was very interested in seeing the Heron Island material.

According to Falla (1942) the three species of the subgenus *Cookilaria*—*cooki*, *leucoptera* and *longirostris*—each divide into two named subspecies, and all have slender bills and bluish feet. The form *leucoptera* includes the Cabbage Tree Island population. Mr Bourke at once realized the significance of the pink feet and wing patterns shown in the slides of the Heron Island birds. Mr. Keith Hindwood and Mr Athel D'Ombraïn have also viewed the slides and, after comparison with museum specimens, agree that they certainly represent *Pterodroma hypoleuca*, the Stout-billed Petrel, but are not detailed enough to determine their subspecific identity.

Falla (1942) divides the species *Pt. hypoleuca* into three subspecies: *hypoleuca*, *axillaris* and *nigripennis*; all possess short, stout bills and stout feet coloured flesh and black. Recorded breeding ranges of these subspecies are Bonin and western Hawaiian Islands; Chatham Islands; and Kermadecs, Three Kings and Austral Islands respectively. Specimens of *nigripennis* have been collected from Lord Howe Island (McKean and Hindwood 1964), but the Heron Island sighting is the first recorded occurrence of *Pt. hypoleuca* in the Australian coastal region.

I here acknowledge the interest and help of Mr Roy Wheeler, Mr Pat Bourke, and Mr John McKean in tracking down an otherwise sleeping record.

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McGill, A. R. 1955. A record of Cook's Petrel in Australian waters. *Emu* 55: 191-4.
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Children's School Camp, Somers, Vic.
Manuscript received January 24, 1964.

Eastern Swamphe takes a downy from a pair of Chestnut Teal.—While studying the problem of birds frequenting Kingsford Smith Aerodrome at Mascot, Sydney, at 18.30 hrs on February 11, 1964, a pair of Chestnut Teal, *Anas castanea*, was seen leading a brood of four downies on the Radar Pond in the centre of the airfield. The pond, which is part of the drainage system, was almost dry and the ducks were feeding on a 30-ft wide mud flat between the water and the reeds that surround the pond.

The lengths of the ducklings were between one fifth and one quarter of that of the adults, and therefore about one to two weeks old. At 18.40 hrs. the brood size was noticed to have been reduced to three. At 18.45 hrs. an Eastern Swamphe, *Porphyrio melanotus*, was seen walking from the water's edge to the reeds with one of the ducklings in its beak. A few seconds later a male and a female Chestnut Teal ran, flapping their wings after the Swamphe and disappeared with it out of sight into the vegetation. About five minutes later both ducks flew back to the water.

It should be noted that apart from the Eastern Swamphe being a not suspected predator on avian prey, it is uncommon among dabbling ducks for the male to assist the female in the leading and defending of the brood.

In conclusion the co-operation and hospitality of the D.C.A. personnel at Kingsford Smith Aerodrome is gratefully acknowledged.—GERARD F. VAN TETS, CSIRO, Division of Wildlife Research, Canberra, A.C.T.