

FIRST RECORD OF THE BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL IN CALIFORNIA

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On 12 September 1970 a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) was seen during an all-day pelagic boat trip off San Diego, San Diego County, California. I and more than forty other observers spent that entire day aboard a chartered sport-fishing boat exploring the waters off San Diego for pelagic birds, venturing as far off shore as the south end of San Clemente Island. When returning from San Clemente Island in the afternoon, at about 32°50¼ N, 117°50¾ W, some 25 to 30 miles off San Diego, the boat passed through an area that had attracted a large number of storm-petrels. I estimated there to be about 400 Black Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma melania*) and 600 Least Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma microsoma*), most in two large rafts on the water, this being very close to the same area where Miller (1936) encountered rafting storm-petrels in 1935. As the boat passed through the flock I saw a white-rumped storm-petrel flying northward some distance in front of the boat, then swing west as if to move around to the stern of the boat. Five minutes later what I assumed to be the same white-rumped storm-petrel had joined eight to ten Black Storm-Petrels following in the wake of the boat. It remained behind the boat for at least 20 minutes, coming to within 75 feet of the boat on a couple of occasions, but remaining between 100 and 200 feet behind the boat for most of the time. Low clouds reduced the glare of the sun, and the fact that the boat was moving in the same direction as the waves gave us a relatively stable deck from which to study the bird. We viewed the bird at leisure through 10× and 8× binoculars, openly discussing the marks noted, and even speculating that it might be a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. I made the following notes.

The white-rumped storm-petrel was clearly smaller than the accompanying Black Storm-Petrels, and I judged it to be about the same size as the Leach's Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) seen earlier in the day. The wings appeared to be long and pointed, clearly being narrower than those of the accompanying Black Storm-Petrels. The tail appeared square-ended most of the time, but was seen to be slightly notched on occasions. The feet and legs were never seen, but the feet did not extend beyond the tip of the tail.

The bird had a distinctive manner of flight, remaining closer to the surface of the water than did the accompanying Black Storm-Petrels, and flying with four or five shallow but rapid wing-beats followed by a glide. When gliding the bird held its wings rigid and straight out from the body, and arched slightly downward at the tips. The manner of flight was more like that of a small shearwater than that of the storm-petrels normally encountered off San Diego, never having the deep wing-beats of the Leach's and Least storm-petrels or the lazy wing-beat of the Black Storm-Petrel.

This bird appeared to be blacker than the accompanying Black Storm-Petrels, but the gray bar on the upper wing-coverts appeared paler than that on the Black Storm-Petrels. The contrast between the paleness of the wing-

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bar and the blackness of the rest of the wing made this mark more prominent than on any of the Least, Black, or Leach's storm-petrel seen during the day. The rump was pure white, with the white extending down onto the sides of the vent, and the shape of the rump patch appeared as a shallow "U" opening toward the back. In addition, there was no dark dividing stripe in the center of the rump as on a Leach's Storm-Petrel.

Jon Atwood, G. Shumway Suffel, Richard E. Webster, and I submitted descriptions to the California Bird Records Committee. The Committee spent a long time scrutinizing this record, finally accepting it unanimously during the fourth circulation (Luther et al. 1983). In 1973 when the record was first reviewed, none of the Committee members was familiar with Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, and they were thus reluctant to rely on information found in the various sources of literature consulted. However, in 1980 when the record was circulated for the fourth time, much had been learned from observers, including some on the Committee who had seen this species at sea. It was verified at this time that the appearance, and particularly the mannerism of flight, of the bird seen off San Diego were characteristic of a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.

IDENTIFICATION

Lee (1984) listed the features useful for identifying the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel at sea, comparing it with both the Leach's and Wilson's storm-petrels. He stated that the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is most like a Leach's Storm-Petrel in size, coloration, and plumage pattern, both species having white rumps. He also stated that the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is almost the same size as the Leach's Storm-Petrel, giving measurements that show it has slightly shorter wings and sketches that show it has a less noticeably forked tail. However, the tail on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel appears to be square-ended much of the time. In addition the shapes of the two species' white rump patches differ. The white on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel forms a uniformly wide shallow U-shaped band across the rump, extending onto the sides of the rump and vent. The shafts of the white rump feathers are white, but the tips of the longest rump feathers are black, giving a uniform banded appearance to the white rump. The white on the Leach's Storm-Petrel is divided down the center by a gray stripe, does not appear uniformly wide as on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, and only occasionally extends down onto the vent. The shafts of the white rump feathers are black. Lee also indicated that the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is a darker bird than the Leach's Storm-Petrel, but this can vary in part according to the relative freshness of the plumage. Unfortunately most of these characters are difficult to evaluate at sea.

The Wilson's Storm-Petrel is noticeably smaller than the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel and has shorter, straighter, and more rounded wings. It also has a striking uniformly wide white rump patch that extends down onto the sides of the vent, as it does on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, but more extensively. The Wilson's Storm-Petrel has a rounded tail that could appear square-ended at times but never appears notched as on a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. The feet of a Wilson's Storm-Petrel extend beyond the tip of

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the tail, whereas those of a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel are never visible beyond the tip of the tail. In addition the webs between the toes on a Wilson's Storm-Petrel are yellow instead of black as on the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.

The flight of the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is noticeably different from that of the Leach's Storm-Petrel, and is now considered the most useful character for separating the two at sea. Unfortunately the authors of earlier field identification guides gave little information on how to separate the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel from the Leach's Storm-Petrel. Watson (1966) considered it nearly impossible to distinguish the two species by appearance, but indicated the flight may be the best at-sea character for this. He remarked, though, that this needed further verification. Peterson (1980) stated the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is very similar to Leach's Storm-Petrel but has shorter wings and a less bounding flight. Brown (1980) was one of the first to describe the flight differences in detail, stating the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel flies with a faster and shallower wing-beat than does the Leach's storm-Petrel, that it moves in regular horizontal zigzags with no vertical bounding during flapping flight, and that it glides on wings held more or less flat. Harrison (1983) described the flight as usually buoyant, following a steady zigzag progression between quick wing-beats and low shearing glides, with wings held flat or bowed below the horizontal, producing a flight pattern recalling that of a small shearwater. Farrand (1983) also described the flight, stating the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel flies with wing-beats shallower than Leach's, gliding like a shearwater, and often following a horizontal zigzag course. Lee (1984) stated that while gliding the bird holds its wings parallel to the water surface with the outer primaries bowed below the rest of the wing as does Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*). Pratt et al. (1987) gave a little more information on the flight and confirmed the shearwater-like appearance.

DISTRIBUTIONAL SUMMARY

The Band-rumped Storm-Petrel ranges over the warmer waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans (Harrison 1983). In the western Pacific Ocean it is known to nest on Hidejima off the east coast of northern Honshu in Japan, may also nest on nearby Sanganijima, and breeds in small numbers on the Izu and the Bonin islands (Hasegawa 1984). It is a very rare in the waters around the Hawaiian Islands in the mid Pacific, though several fledglings have been found on Kauai in recent years (Harrison et al. 1984) and the species has been heard vocalizing in Haleakala Crater on Maui (Pyle 1984). In the eastern Pacific it is widely distributed through the Galapagos Islands where some 15,000 pairs nest (Coulter 1984). Crossin (in King 1974) indicated the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel has been seen as far north as 25°N in the eastern Pacific Ocean, showing two sightings from the vicinity of 25°N, 120°W, but Pitman (1986) plotted no positive sightings of the species north of 10°N, showing sightings north only to the vicinity of 10°N, 125°W. The bird sighted off San Diego on 12 September 1970 is, to date, the only accepted record from the Pacific coast of North America. Pyle, however, reported at least nine between 120 and 160 nautical miles off San Nicolas

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Island in a restricted area of convergence between the California Current and the pelagic waters of the central Pacific in July 1989 (McCaskie 1989).

Even though this species occurs disjunctly in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and breeding colonies in both oceans are widely separated, the various populations do not differ significantly in size or color. Therefore the subspecies once described are no longer recognized, the species being considered monotypic (Cramp and Simmons 1977).

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