

Hunter Bird Observers Club Records Appraisal Committee Report for 2014

Below is a list of cases assessed and decided by the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) in 2014. A summary of each case is also provided, along with photographs of some species assessed.

List of Cases

366	Slender-billed Prion	off Port Stephens	June 23, 2013	Accepted
376	Greater Sand Plover	Hawks Nest	Dec 10, 2013	Accepted
377	Ruff	Hexham Swamp	Dec 2013-Feb 2014	Accepted
378	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Hexham Swamp	Dec 2013-Feb 2014	Accepted
379	Pilotbird	Wollemi NP	Dec 16, 2013	Accepted
382	King Quail	Ash Island	Jan 6, 2014	Accepted
384	White-tailed Tropicbird	off Port Stephens	Jan 12, 2014	Accepted
385	Black Honeyeater	Goulburn River NP	Feb 2, 2014	Accepted
386	King Quail	Cattai Wetlands	Feb 8, 2014	Accepted
387	Red-chested Button-quail	Parkville	Apr 24, 2012	Not Accepted
388	Painted Honeyeater	Cattai Wetlands	Feb 4, 2014	Accepted
389	Tahiti Petrel	off Port Stephens	Feb 23, 2014	Accepted
390	Kermadec Petrel	off Port Stephens	Feb 23, 2014	Accepted
391	Satin Flycatcher	Watagan Forests	Oct 25, 2013	Accepted
392	Tahiti Petrel	off Port Stephens	Mar 9, 2014	Accepted
393	Kermadec Petrel	off Port Stephens	Mar 9, 2014	Accepted
394	Streaked Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Mar 9, 2014	Accepted
395	Black Petrel	off Port Stephens	Mar 9, 2014	Accepted
396	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Mungo Brush	Mar 9 2014	Accepted
397	Black Petrel	off Port Stephens	Mar 30, 2014	Accepted
398	Brolga	Nabiac	Feb 5, 2014	Accepted
399	Buller's Albatross	off Swansea	Jul 24, 2014	Accepted
400	Buller's Albatross	off Port Stephens	Mar 30, 2014	Accepted

401	White-chinned Petrel	Old Bar Beach	Sept 15, 2014	Not Accepted
402	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Mungo Brush	Sept/Oct, 2014	Accepted
403	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Tighes Hill	Oct 12, 2014	Accepted
404	Black-bellied Storm-petrel	off Port Stephens	Oct 12, 2014	Accepted
405	White-chinned Petrel	off Port Stephens	Nov 16, 2014	Accepted

* Note that Cases #380, #381 and #383 were not assessed due to either a lack or unreliability of information available to the committee.

Case Summaries

Case 366: A **Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* was seen by several observers on the Port Stephens pelagic on 23 June 2013. The bird was seen at the continental shelf break and was seen in the presence of Fairy *P. turtur* and Antarctic Prion(s) *P. desolata* (RAC Case #367). As with the Antarctic Prion, despite the fact that many observers saw and photographed the bird, the committee felt it prudent that an URF be submitted due to the difficulty in prion identification. The observer thoroughly distinguished the bird from the common Fairy Prions that were around the boat at the same time as well as the Antarctic Prion(s) also present. This is only the 4th accepted record of Slender-billed Prion for the Hunter Region (with all past records coming from 2002 and some pertaining to multiple birds that year). **Allan Richardson.**

Case 376: A **Greater Sand Plover** *Limicola falcinellus* was seen and photographed by a single observer at Bennetts Beach (Hawks Nest) on the 10 December 2013. The bird was apparently gone the next day. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record. **Tim Faulkner.**

Case 377: A **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* was first observed on the 10 December 2013 on Hexham Swamp, with at least 2 birds (male and female) being seen in the ensuing weeks (with sightings extending into Feb 2014). **Mick Roderick.**

Case 378: Several **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were observed over the period December 2013 to February 2014 on Hexham Swamp. The first report was 15 December when 3 birds were seen. Several reports of 3-4 birds were made, with the peak count being of 6 birds on the 27 January 2014. Furthermore, a single bird was photographed on Stockton Sandspit on 4 March 2014. **Allan Richardson.**

Case 379: **Pilotbirds** *Pycnoptilus floccosus* were recorded at several locations in Wollemi NP by 3 observers on 16 December 2013. A total of 7 birds were seen and/or heard, with at least one bird being photographed. Some of these birds were found at locations where the species had been recorded previously (e.g. 2000 and 2010) and it is likely that they are resident in this area. **Ann Lindsey, Mike Newman and Alan Stuart.**

Case 382: Several **King Quail *Excalfactoria chinensis*** were first reported from an area in the north of Ash Island on the 6 January, 2014. A detailed submission was made to the committee and the record was accepted unanimously. It is worth noting that in the interim numerous observers also saw King Quails at the same site. **Alan Stuart.**

Case 384: Two 'white' birds were flushed off the surface of the ocean during the Port Stephens pelagic on Jan 12, 2014. These were soon identified as **White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*** and were well-photographed. This is the only sighting of any tropicbird on Port Stephens pelagics since they commenced in February 2010. **Mick Roderick.**

Case 385: A **Black Honeyeater *Sugomel niger*** was observed along Ringwood Road, Goulburn River NP on February 2, 2014. Although no URRF was submitted, photographic evidence was sufficient for the committee to accept the record. **Michael Kearns.**

Case 386: **King Quail *Excalfactoria chinensis*** were seen at Cattai Wetlands on 8 February 2014, including brief sightings of two of the birds near the "causeway" and a call from what was presumed to be a third bird. Other reports of King Quails at Cattai Wetlands have been made in the interim, though these have not been verified. **Alan Stuart.**

Case 387: A group of **Red-chested Button-quail *Turnix pyrothorax*** were claimed to have been seen on the 24 April 2012 on private property near Parkville in the Upper Hunter. The submission was made quite some time after the observation by one of two observers. Unfortunately the submission lacked the detail such that other possible confusion species could be sufficiently ruled out and the record was unable to be accepted by the committee.

Case 388: A **Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta*** was seen and photographed at Cattai Wetlands on the 2 February 2014. Although this species does not normally require a submission to the RAC, the location was considered very unusual for this species and hence confirmation was sought. The submission was supported by a photograph that clearly showed a Painted Honeyeater (possibly an immature bird). **Ashwin Rudder.**

Case 389: A **Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*** was seen and photographed off Port Stephens on the 17 February 2014. Although no URRF was submitted, the photograph obtained clearly depicted a Tahiti Petrel and the record was accepted by the committee. **Ben Bright.**

Case 390: An intermediate phase **Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*** was seen and well-photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic on 23 February 2014. **Allan Richardson.**

Case 391: A male **Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*** was photographed along a road in the northern part of the Watagan Forests on 25 October 2013. The status of this species in the Hunter Region is yet to be clarified due in part to the potential confusion with the very similar Leadene Flycatcher *M. rubecula*. The majority of records of this species appear to come from the Greater Barrington Tops (at altitudes of >500m) so it is significant to have confirmation from the Watagan Forests. **Bruce Hosken.**

Cases 392-394 were all seen and photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic on 9 March 2014, being **Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata***, **Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*** and **Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*** respectively. This was a particularly successful pelagic trip, as a **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*** was also seen (assessed and accepted by NSW ORAC, as outlined below). **Mick Roderick, Steve Roderick.**

Case 395: A **Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*** was recorded on the same pelagic as Cases 392-394 above, but in unusual circumstances. The bird was not actually noticed on the day and was identified the following day from an image taken late in the afternoon (on the return to port). **Mick Roderick.**

Case 396: A **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus regina*** was observed on the Rainforest Walk at Mungo Brush (Myall Lakes NP) on the 9 March 2014 (a very busy day for the HBOC RAC). Although no photographs were provided, the submission detailed the sighting to the satisfaction of the committee and was the first confirmed sighting of the species in the Region since 2008. **Dean Purcell.**

Case 397: A **Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*** seen briefly on the Port Stephens pelagic on 30 March 2014. Unfortunately no photos were taken. **Mick Roderick.**

Case 398: This case detailed an observation of a **Brolga *Grus rubicunda*** at Nabitac on the 5 February 2014. The bird was observed in flight only but was easily identified by the observer, who had much prior experience with this species in northern Australia. This is only the 2nd record for the Region in recent times, the other being of a single bird at Morpeth in November 2005. **David Atkinson.**

Case 399: A total of 5 **Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*** were seen on the pelagic trip off Swansea 24 July 2014. In fact, all 5 birds were seen around the boat at the same time. Once considered a rarity in NSW waters, this species is now recorded regularly on NSW pelagic trips in winter. **Mick Roderick.**

Case 400: A single **Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*** was seen and photographed well on the Port Stephens pelagic trip 10 August 2014. **Mick Roderick.**

Case 401: A single **White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*** was claimed to have been watched off Old Bar Beach by an observer on 15 September 2014. The committee generally felt that the description was quite brief and that to distinguish between the dark *Procellaria* petrels (e.g. Black, Westland and White-chinned) close views are necessary. The committee wasn't able to accept the record with the information provided.

Case 402: On the 27 September 2014, 2 **Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves *Ptilinopus regina*** were heard (and one subsequently seen well) along the rainforest walk at Mungo Brush, Myall Lakes NP. The report sparked quite a bit of interest amongst local birders and several birds were heard and seen at the location in the ensuing weeks, with birds present until at least 27 October. **Joshua Bergmark, Nathan Ruser and Simon Gorta.**

Case 403: A juvenile **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* was taken into care after hitting a window in Tighes Hill on 11 October 2014. Photographs of the bird were distributed around the committee, leaving no doubt about the identification of the bird. Unfortunately it did not recover and died later that week. **Joy Nicholls.**

Case 404: A single **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* was photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic 12 October 2014. Although there was just a single image, it was enough to eliminate potential confusion species and was unanimously accepted by the committee. **Brook Whyllie.**

Case 405: A **White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* was seen and photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic 16 November 2014. The bird was faithful to the boat for an extended period, enabling views that easily distinguished it from other dark *Procellaria* petrels (e.g. Black and Westland Petrels). This is just the 2nd confirmed record of this species in recent times, with a 3rd being from a beachcast bird from Newcastle in 1968. **Ashwin Rudder.**

Photographs

Case 366

Slender-billed Prion, off Port Stephens 23/06/2013

(Allan Richardson)



Case 377

Ruff and Reeve, Hexham Swamp 17/01/2014

(Allan Richardson)

Case 388

Pilotbird, Wollemi NP 16/12/2013

(Ann Lindsey)



Case 385

Black Honeyeater, Goulburn River NP 2/02/2014

(Michael Kearns)



Case 390

Kermadec Petrel, off Port Stephens
23/02/2014

(Allan Richardson)

Case 388

Painted Honeyeater, Cattai Wetlands 2/02/2014

(Ashwin Rudder)





Case 394

Streaked Shearwater, off Port Stephens
09/03/2014

(Steve Roderick)



Case 399

Buller's Albatross, off Swansea
25/04/2014

(Mick Roderick)

Case 402

Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Mungo Brush

11/10/2014

(Shaun McKay)



Hunter Region Cases assessed by BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) or the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) in 2014

The following cases were assessed the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) during 2014:

BARC Submission No 806: New Zealand Storm Petrel *Fregetta maoriana* off Swansea, NSW 14th April 2013. Submitted by: Mick Roderick, Allan Richardson and Mike Kuhl. **Accepted**
(6th confirmed Australian record of this species)

BARC Submission No 808: Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* on Hexham Swamp, NSW 18th January 2014. Submitted by: Rod Warnock & Christina Port **Accepted**
(9th confirmed Australian record of this species)

The following cases were assessed the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) during 2014:

NSW ORAC Case 607: Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata* off Port Stephens on March 9 2014. Submitted by Mick Roderick. **Accepted**
(22nd confirmed NSW record of this species)

NSW ORAC Case 623: Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* at Phoenix Park 26 January 2014
Submitted by Dan and Trevor Williams **Accepted**
(34th confirmed NSW record of this species)