



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Records Appraisal Committee



2015 Report

Compiled by Mick Roderick

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Hunter Bird Observers Club Records Appraisal Committee 2015 Report

Below is a list of cases assessed and decided by the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) in 2015. A summary of each case is also provided, along with photographs of some species assessed. A summary of cases relevant to the Hunter Region assessed by either the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) or the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) during 2015 is also provided.

Front Cover image – HBOC RAC Case 426 - Buller's Albatrosses off Swansea, 9/07/2015 (Allan Richardson)

List of Cases

406	Orange Chat	Hexham Swamp	Nov 29, 2014	Accepted
407	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Harrington	Jan 17 2015	Accepted
408	Buller's Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Jan 11, 2015	Accepted
409	Kermadec Petrel	off Port Stephens	Jan 11, 2015	Accepted
410	Forest Kingfisher	Cattai Wetlands	Dec 24, 2014	Accepted
412	Buller's Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Feb 26, 2015	Accepted
413	Black Petrel	off Port Stephens	Feb 26, 2015	Accepted
414	Streaked Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Mar 3, 2015	Accepted
415	White Tern	near Wybong	Mar 15, 2015	Accepted
416	Freckled Duck	Deep Pond	Mar 6, 2015	Accepted
417	Shy Albatross	off Port Stephens	Mar 30, 2015	Accepted
418	Streaked Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Mar 30, 2015	Accepted
419	Buller's Shearwater	off Port Stephens	Mar 30, 2015	Accepted
420	Diamond Dove	Durrigere SCA	Apr 3, 2015	Accepted
421	White-tailed Tropicbird	Redhead Beach	Apr 24, 2015	Accepted
423	Pacific Gull	Nobbys Beach/Breakwall	May 21, 2015	Accepted
424	Freckled Duck	Walka Water Works	May 28, 2015	Accepted
425	Buller's Albatross	off Port Stephens	Jun 14, 2015	Accepted
426	Buller's Albatross	off Swansea	Jul 9, 2015	Accepted
431	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Mungo Brush	Oct 2015	Accepted
432	Kelp Gull	Stockton Beach	Jun 14, 2015	Accepted

433	Freckled Duck	Walka Water Works	Oct 2015	Accepted
434	Ruff	Near Coopernook	Nov 1, 2015	Accepted
436	Ruff	Tomago Wetlands	Nov 17, 2015	Accepted
437	Brolga	Martindale	Nov 15, 2015	Accepted
438	Crimson Chat	Muswellbrook	Nov 16, 2015	Accepted
439	Black Petrel	Off Swansea	Dec 10, 2015	Accepted

* Note that Cases #411, #422 and #435 were not assessed due to a lack of information available to the committee.

Case Summaries

Case 406: An **Orange Chat** *Epthianura aurifrons* was seen very briefly and photographed by a single observer on Hexham Swamp on the 29 November 2014. Despite several attempts by other observers to locate the bird the following day, it was just seen on this one occasion. There was some discussion about the provenance of the bird, given that they are kept by aviculturalists (though are uncommon and expensive) but it was deemed that there was insufficient evidence to suggest it was an escapee. This is the first confirmed record for the Hunter Region, though historical reports from the Upper Hunter are known. **Greg Pearson**

Case 407: A **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* was photographed in the rainforest at Harrington on the 19 January 2015. Very clear images were provided, leaving no doubt in the identification. This species is most often reported from coastal rainforest locations in the Region. **Michael Kearns**

Case 408: A **Buller's Shearwater** *Ardenna bulleri* was seen and photographed near the continental shelf on the Port Stephens pelagic on the 11th January 2015. Case 409, an intermediate phase **Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta*, was also seen and photographed on the same day. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 410: A **Forest Kingfisher** *Todiramphus macleayii* was seen by several observers at Cattai Wetlands on Christmas Eve, 2014. The submission to the committee by the key observer outlined many of the important aspects required to differentiate this rare species for the Hunter from the more common Sacred Kingfisher *T. sanctus*. **Krishna Nagarajan**

Cases 412 and 413: A **Buller's Shearwater** *Ardenna bulleri* (#412) and **Black Petrel** *Procellaria parkinsoni* (#413) were seen and photographed well on the BirdLife Australia Photography Group's pelagic outing on the 26 February 2015. Of interest, the Black Petrel was assessed as having a perforated cornea in the right eye and was likely blind in that eye. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 414: A **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas* was seen and photographed on the second BirdLife Australia Photography Group's pelagic outing on the 2 March 2015. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 415: This case related to a **White Tern *Gygis alba*** that had become disoriented and was found by mine workers on the ground on the 15 March 2015 near Wybong in the Mid/Upper Hunter Valley. The bird was taken into care but subsequently died. **Per Tasman Willis**

Case 416: A group of 6 **Freckled Ducks *Stictonetta naevosa*** were observed on Deep Pond by a visiting birder from the UK on the 6 March 2015. The observer was aware of the significance of the observation and submitted an URRF for the record. **Richard Allison**

Cases 417-419: These 3 cases were all seen on the Port Stephens pelagic 30 March 2015. 417 relates to an adult **Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*** that was distinguished from the almost identical **White-capped Albatross *T. steadi*** by the presence of a yellow wash at the base of the bill. 418 relates to a **Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*** seen and photographed well, whilst 419 was a **Buller's Shearwater *Ardenna bulleri*** which was not photographed but was seen well by an experienced observer who noted all of the salient identifying features of that species. The Shy Albatross is just the second record accepted for the Hunter since the split from White-capped Albatross has been adopted. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 420: A single immature **Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*** was observed by a number of people that attended the Easter HBOC camp at Durrigere State Conservation Area on the 4 April. The bird was apparently present for at least a couple of hours after which it was not seen again. This is normally a very inland species and could have been forced closer to the coast due to conditions being unfavourable in its normal range. **Graeme O'Connor et al**

Case 421: A juvenile **White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*** was found beachcast along Redhead Beach on the 24 April 2015 in the wake of the East Coast Low severe weather event that had resulted in many seabirds being forced close to shore, with some not surviving the storm. **Robert McDonald**

Case 423: Two juvenile **Pacific Gulls *Larus pacificus*** were initially discovered hawking inside Nobbys Breakwall on the 21 May 2015. One of the birds was later seen loafing at Newcastle Baths by the same observer. Neither bird was reported again until about 4 days later, when they were relocated on Nobbys Beach. Thereafter they were seen by several observers until approximately the 30 May. This record coincided with a number of reports of juvenile Pacific Gulls northward of their regular range along the NSW coast (e.g. birds at Port Macquarie, Iluka and The Entrance). **Richard Nicholas**

Case 424: A group of 12 **Freckled Ducks *Stictonetta naevosa*** were initially found at Walka Water Works on 28 May 2015, with numbers of birds reported swelling to 59 over the course of the next few days. Lesser numbers persisted into June. **Alan Stuart**

Case 425: Three **Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*** were seen on the Port Stephens pelagic on 14 June 2015. One of the three was noted as having a broken leg. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 426: Three **Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*** were seen on the Swansea pelagic on 9 July 2015. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 431: Several reports of **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* were received from the rainforest at Mungo Brush during October 2015. **Steve Roderick et al**

Case 432: An adult **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* was seen and photographed on Stockton Beach (Worimi Conservation Lands). **Nadine Russell**

Case 433: At least one **Freckled Duck** *Stictonetta naevosa* was seen and photographed at Walka Water Works, near Maitland, during October 2015. **Marg Clarke**

Case 434: A **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* was seen during the NSW Twitchathon at the Cattai Creek Wetlands, near Cooperook on the 1 November 2015.

Case 436: A **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* was found at Tomago Wetlands on the 17 November 2015.

Case 437: A **Brolga** *Grus rubicunda* was seen in flight in the Martindale Valley on the 15 November 2015. Although the observation was brief, all the key identification features were noted and any possible confusion risks were eliminated. **Dan Williams and Stew Betts**

Case 438: A pair of **Crimson Chats** *Epthianura tricolor* were observed from a vehicle near Muswellbrook on the 16 November 2015. This case was heavily scrutinised by the committee, with an opinion sought by a proxy member and a second round of voting taking place before the record was accepted. It was noted that the observer saw the birds clearly and is very familiar with the species. Despite thorough searches immediately after the initial observation, the birds could not be relocated. This is the first confirmed record for the Hunter Region, though as for the Orange Chat, historical reports from the Upper Hunter are known. **Allan Richardson**

Case 439: Two **Black Petrels** *Procellaria parkinsoni* were photographed on the Swansea pelagic on the 10 December 2015. **Allan Richardson et al**

Photographs

HBOC RAC Case 406

Orange Chat, Hexham Swamp, 29/11/2014

(Greg Pearson)



HBOC RAC Case 407

Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Harrington 17/01/2015

(Michael Kearns)



HBOC RAC Case 420

Diamond Dove, Durrigere State
Conservation Area, 4/04/2015

(Lorna Mee)



HBOC RAC Case 423

Pacific Gulls, Newcastle Ocean Baths
27/05/2015

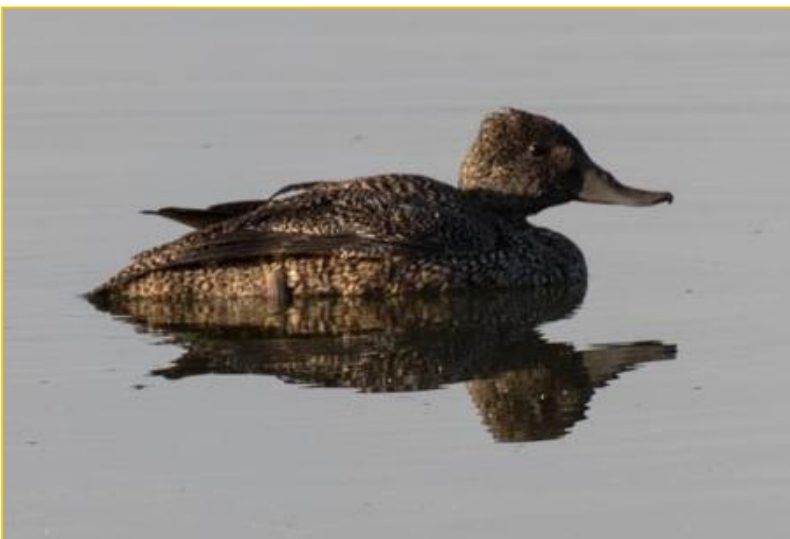
(Richard Nicholas)

HBOC RAC Case 432

Kelp Gull

Stockton Beach, 14/06/2015

(Robyn George)



HBOC RAC Case 433

Freckled Duck

Walka Water Works, October
2015

(Marg Clarke)

HBOC RAC Case 439

Black Petrel, off Swansea

10/12/2015

(Allan Richardson)



NSW ORAC Case 637

Long-toed Stint, Kooragang Dykes

22/11/2014

(Dan Williams)

NSW ORAC Case 638

Great Frigatebird, Newcastle Harbour

7-8/01/2015

(Allan Richardson)



Hunter Region Cases assessed by BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) or the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) in 2015

No cases relevant to the Hunter Region were assessed by the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) during 2015. The following cases were assessed the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) during 2015:

NSW ORAC Case 633: Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*, Hexham Swamp 30 November 2014.

Submitted by Allan Richardson.

Accepted (49th confirmed NSW record of this species)

NSW ORAC Case 634: Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*, off Swansea 4 December 2014.

Submitted by Mick Roderick

Accepted (13th confirmed NSW record of this species)

NSW ORAC Case 637: Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Kooragang Dykes 22 November 2014.

Submitted by Dan Williams

Accepted (30th confirmed NSW record of this species)

NSW ORAC Case 638: Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*, Newcastle Harbour 7/8 January 2015.

Submitted by Adam Fawcett, Ian Benson and Mick Roderick

Accepted (4th confirmed NSW record of this species)

NSW ORAC Case 639: Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*, Stockton Beach (beachcast), 13 and 15 June 2014.

Submitted by Mick Roderick

Accepted (approx. 31st confirmed NSW record of this species)