

AT-SEA RECORDS OF THREE RARELY REPORTED PETREL SPECIES IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN ATLANTIC OCEAN

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During the austral summer of 1999/2000 I observed birds at sea between Ushuaia, Argentina and the Antarctic Peninsula on four occasions, visiting several sub-Antarctic islands and also covering the Falkland Islands–Buenos Aires transect aboard the R.V. *Akademik Shuleykin* and R.V. *Akademik Ioffe*. I report here on observations of three rarely recorded species.

SPECIES OBSERVED

Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata*

I observed this species three times. The first observation took place on 13 March 2000, 15h00 local time, at 46°14'S, 59°11'W. At 18h40 the same day, a different bird, based on markings, was seen at 45°28'S, 58°54'W. The third record is of two birds on 14 March 2000, at 41°44'S, 57°36'W. This last record was made close to the edge of Argentine territorial waters, and I presume the petrel extends its range into this zone and will prove to be a new addition to the Argentinean avifauna. Many other birds breeding in the Tristan da Cunha Group (for examples see Dabbene 1921, 1922, 1923), show the same pattern.

The pelagic distribution of the Spectacled Petrel outside its breeding grounds at Inaccessible Island is becoming better known and has been estimated to cover an area extending from the coasts of South America to South Africa between 25°S and 41°S (Enticott & O'Connell 1985, Olmos 1997, Ryan 1999, Camphuysen & Van Deer Meer 2000). The last authors also suggest there is a non-breeding population over deep oceanic waters, far from their breeding grounds, that the records presented here seem to confirm. The petrel seems to be associated with warmer waters north of the Sub-tropical Convergence, although a few wander farther south (Rumboll & Jehl 1977). There are also some records made by Gould in the 19th century who stated that he saw spectacled birds in considerable numbers near the Falkland Islands, suggesting a wider range (Rowan *et al.* 1951). However, there have been no subsequent records from latitudes south of 41°S.

Georgian Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*

One bird was found freshly dead aboard the vessel on 16 January 2000 when our position was halfway from the Antarctic Peninsula to the Cape Horn area, at 58°09'S, 61°08'W. The bird was identified using Harrison's (1985) sketches of the bills of the different diving petrels. Unfortunately, the specimen could not be preserved but was photographed. There is of course a difference between the

position at the time when the bird actually reached the ship and the coordinates that were taken the next morning, but as the ship's course was direct from the Antarctic Peninsula to Cape Horn, the diving petrel had wandered about 1500 km from its closest known breeding grounds at South Georgia. Other diving petrels are capable of a similar dispersion as confirmed by the record of Magellanic Diving Petrel *P. magellani* in the Drake Passage (Blendinger 1998) and the sighting of several unidentified diving petrels on 8 March 2000 between 59°42'S, 59°42'W and 59°32'S, 59°41'W (pers. obs.).

The Georgian Diving Petrel is almost impossible to identify at sea, given its close similarity to the Common Diving Petrel *P. urinatrix* (Harrison 1985, Enticott & Tipling 1998). The known range of the Georgian Diving Petrel is confined to the sub-Antarctic zone where it breeds at a number of islands. It is probably sedentary and spreads only into seas surrounding the breeding sites, although some members of colonies seem to wander farther away (Harrison 1985, Carboneras 1992, Enticott & Tipling 1998).

Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

On 14 March 2000 at 40°20'S, 57°07'W, a mixed flock of about 20 storm petrels was flushed from the water, providing good views for several minutes. Two Leach's Storm Petrels were identified among the majority of Wilson's Storm Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* that formed the group. The Leach Storm Petrels looked larger and somewhat browner than the Wilson Storm Petrels, showing a characteristic white band on the upper wings, with longer and more slender wings bent at the carpal joint. The flight involved less flapping than Wilson's, gliding most of the time, with the wings held below the body. Looking down on the birds I could see the white rump divided by a greyish central line towards the forked tail.

This species occurs mainly in the North Pacific and Atlantic Oceans but it has also been rarely reported in the Southern Ocean (Biermann & Vous 1950, Veit *et al.* 1996, Arballo & Cravino 1999) as far south as the South Shetland Islands in Antarctica (Hahn & Quillfeldt 1998) as well as breeding off the coast of South Africa (Whittington *et al.* 1999). Although it is common and often observed over the Equatorial Counter-current (Harris & Hansen 1974, Bourne & Curtis 1984) it has not been previously reported by most authors working off South America (Cooke & Mills 1972, Jehl 1974, Rumboll & Jehl 1977, Jehl *et al.* 1979, Veit 1995, Orgeira 1997).

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